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MOTHER OF DIVINE GRACE: A Chapter in the Theology of the Immaculate.

By
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TO

HIS GRACE THE MOST REVEREND

ROBERT WILLIAM SPENCE, O.P., D.D.,

ARCHBISHOP OF ADELAIDE

WITH THE RESPECTFUL AND AFFECTIONATE HOMAGE

OF THE WRITER

PREFACE

WE address our Blessed Lady in the Litany of Loreto as Mother of Divine Grace. Why do we so address our Lady? What is the meaning of this invocation? This little book is an attempt to answer these questions as clearly and simply as possible. It is not what is commonly called a "pious" book: it is frankly theological. But because it aims at giving the theological reasons for Catholic devotion to our Lady, and because solid devotion to the Virgin Mother of God is a consequence of true knowledge of what she is in herself, in her relations to God, and in her relations to mankind, we hope that piety will be served by it.

The writer desires to express his great indebtedness to the admirable volume *La Mère de Grâce* by Père Hugon, O.P., which he has closely followed; and to the beautiful and exhaustive work by Père Terrien, S.J., *La Mère de Dieu et la Mère des Hommes*.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTORY

NO Catholic would dream of exalting the Immaculate Mother of God above her Divine Son. No Catholic would think of giving to Mary the worship, honour, glory, and praise that belong to Jesus Christ. But every Catholic recognises the fact that God's Mother holds a unique position, and that the relationship between "the Child and His Mother" is inviolable. Thought of the One instinctively calls up thought of the other, and in this the Catholic mind is the faithful reflection of the mind of the Eternal. God does nothing by chance: and when Mary of Nazareth became Mother of God, she entered into a relationship which, in the mind and will of the Almighty, had been decreed from all eternity.

Furthermore, the Catholic Church, from an experience of nineteen centuries, is fully aware that there can be no real solid love of and loyalty to Him Who, while He is the Eternal Word, is also "the Word made flesh," if love of and loyalty

to His Mother be wanting. And hence it is that the Church reverences Mary Immaculate just because she is Mother of God. It stands to reason that our Blessed Lady who "was chosen from amongst thousands to be in the full sense Mother of God," cannot be what Protestantism protests she is, an ordinary woman like other women. No; just because our Lady was freely and deliberately chosen for the position was she "blessed . . . above all women upon the earth,"[1] and was prepared and made worthy—it is the expression of St. Thomas—so far as any creature could be made worthy, for her high office. Consequently, every privilege which in the mind of the Church was enjoyed by our Blessed Lady is but the logical outcome of her greatest privilege, the Divine Maternity.[2]

This privilege was conferred but once and upon only one creature. There was only one Annunciation; it was made to the Virgin of Nazareth. There was but one Incarnation; it was in the Virgin's womb that the mystery was wrought. There is but one Jesus Christ; Mary is His Mother. No power can destroy the relationship that exists between a mother and her child. Strive as

[1] Jud. xiii. 23.

[2] *La Mère de Dieu et la Mère des Hommes*, par Père J. B. Terrien, S.J., vol. i., liv. ii., ch. 345. Paris, 1900.

men may, they can never rob our Blessed Lady of the crown of Divine Motherhood which has been placed upon her brow by God Himself.

As we look back to the beginnings of Christianity two beings compel our attention: Jesus, and the Mother who bore Him. The shepherds saw them in the cave by the wayside, when at the bidding of the angel they went over to Bethlehem "to see this word . . . which the Lord had shown them."[1] Wise men from the East were led by a star across the desert until at last they found "the Child with Mary His Mother, and falling down they adored Him."[2]

It is the same on each page of the Gospels: Jesus and Mary are always together, on the Hill of Sacrifice as in the cave of Bethlehem. Time has ratified the decrees of eternity. Jesus and Mary were united in the mind of God. They were united during thirty-three years of earthly life. In heaven they are still united, and shall be for ever. Why, then, should men try to separate them? Why refuse to honour the Mother on the plea that by doing so they dishonour her Son? Has Mary Immaculate brought dishonour to the race of man? And if not, why

[1] Luke xi. 15. [2] Matt. xi. 11.

refuse to give her the glory that is her due? What has devotion to and love of God's Mother accomplished in the world since the beginning of Christianity? Have they made for the world's uplifting and betterment? Have they been productive of greater purity, nobility of character, and delicacy? Ruskin is not a man to be accused of what some persons, Ruskin himself included, call "Mariolatry," yet Ruskin tells us that: "After the most careful examination, neither as adversary nor as friend, of the influences of Catholicism for good and evil, I am persuaded that the worship of the Madonna has been one of its noblest and most vital graces, and has never been otherwise than productive of true holiness of life and purity of character. . . . There has probably not been an innocent cottage home throughout the length and breadth of Europe during the whole period of vital Christianity, in which the imagined presence of the Madonna has not given sanctity to the humblest duties, and comfort to the sorest trials of women; and every brightest and loftiest achievement of the arts and strength of manhood has been the fulfilment of the assured prophecy of the poor Israelite maiden: 'He that is mighty hath magnified me, and holy is His name.'"[1] This is noble testimony, and it is the deliberate

[1] *Fors Clavigera*, letter xli.

evidence of a man who was not by any means partial to the Catholic Church. His words could be supported by those of other writers, but there is no need. The testimony of Ruskin is the testimony of history.

From the beginning of her existence the Catholic Church has made for the uplifting of the people. Freeman and serf, rich and poor, lettered and illiterate, were and are on an equal footing in the eyes of the Church, because all men are equal in the sight of God; and it was the Catholic Church that created the woman, the Virgin, the Wife, and the Mother. The Church established social and domestic life on a firm basis by her repudiation of divorce, her insistence upon the indissolubility and sacredness of the marriage-tie, and the equality of the sexes. We are aware that these statements are questioned by a certain class of writers at the present time, and that they are flatly contradicted by many. But it is impossible to gainsay historical facts; and history tells us that, before the advent of Christ, the position of woman was such as to make the complaint of Medea absolutely true: "Of all beings on earth, woman is the most unfortunate." In the East amongst the Assyrians and Persians, in India and Scythia, in Greece and Rome, woman was degraded by being made the victim of divorce, polygamy, and

legalised prostitution.[1] Athens kept its women apart, always in subjection, liable to be bought and sold; while the only women who received any recognition, who were permitted any freedom, or allowed to take any part in public life, were the hetæræ. The Spartan woman was regarded as a servant of the State whose sole duty was to bear children. Roman women were "owned" by their husbands or by their nearest male relatives, who had full power to dispose of them; and a Roman mother had no share in the education of her children.[2]

The result of this tyranny and mistrust was only what might have been foreseen. Wounded in her most cherished possession, woman revenged herself for her loss of honour and dignity by unbridled licence and the most shameless depravity, until at last the Roman matron came to count the years of her life by the number of "husbands" she had wedded, and immorality grew to so appalling an extent, that even pagan poets had

[1] For a description of the status and condition of woman before Christianity, *cf. La Vierge Marie et le Plan Divin*, par Auguste N. Nicolas, tome iv., liv. iv., ch. i.; Döllinger, *The Gentile and the Jew*, English translation by N. Darnell, 2nd ed., vol. i., bk. vi.; *Apologie des Christenthums*, by Albert M. Weiss, O.P., French translation, vol. i., pp. 457 *sqq.*; Lecky, *History of European Morals*, vol. ii., ch. v.

[2] *Cf.* Döllinger, *op. cit.*, vol. i., bk. vi.; vol. ii., bk. ix.

their hours of despair at the sight of such wide-spread corruption.[1] The position of woman in Greece, and under the Roman Emperors, was similar to her position in those countries where Christianity—and by Christianity we mean the Catholic Church—has gained no foothold. "She is sacrificed on the tomb of her husband in India," says de Maistre, "is a slave under the Koran, and is regarded as an article of commerce amongst savage tribes."[2]

There was, however, one nation which was an honourable exception in its treatment of woman—the Jewish nation.[3] Amongst the Jews woman was held in honour;[4] marriage was not regarded as a mere State affair,[5] and children were considered a blessing.[6] Domestic life was fostered, and a man was considered to have attained the fulness of earthly happiness "when he tilled his

[1] *Cf.* Horace, *Carmina*, iii. 6.

[2] *Ap.* Nicholas, *op. cit.*, p. 316.

[3] Tacitus (*Germania*, 18, 19, 20) extols the Germans on account of their morality; but as Father Weiss shows (*op. cit.*, vol. i., pp. 453–454), the Roman historian has idealised them. The Germans were not at all so perfect as Tacitus represented them. They shared with other nations the prevailing views regarding woman, though not to such an extreme degree. They despised woman nevertheless, and as proof of their contempt for her, forced her to work as a drudge.

[4] Tob. vi. 17, 18.

[5] Deut. xxiv. 5.

[6] Ps. cxii. 9.

land in peace . . . and every man sat under his vine, and under his fig-tree; and there was none to make him afraid."[1] "The very terms by which woman is named in the Old Testament," says Edersheim, "are significant. If man is *Ish*, his wife is *Isha*, simply his equal; if the husband is *Gever*, the ruler, the woman is in her own domain, *Gevirath* and *Gevereth*, the mistress (as frequently in the history of Sarah and in other passages), or else the dweller at home (*Nevath bayith*, Ps. lxviii. 12)."[2] Divorce, it is true, was permitted and polygamy was not unknown. But divorce was merely a temporary concession on account of "hardness of heart," while polygamy was the exception, not the rule.[3] The Prophet Malachias gives us clearly to understand that both divorce and polygamy were hateful.[4]

How did it come to pass that, at a period of general corruption, the Jewish race was comparatively untainted by the prevailing laxity of morals, and that woman, despised and degraded amongst other nations, was held in esteem and honour by the people of Israel? Was it not because the

[1] 1 Macc. xiv. 5, 12.

[2] *Sketches of Jewish Social Life in the days of Christ*, p. 141. The Religious Tract Society. London.

[3] ii. 14–17. For a description of the status of woman in Palestine, *cf.* Edersheim, *op. cit.*, ch. ix.; Döllinger, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., pp. 359 *sqq.*

[4] Mal. ii. 14-15.

light of a great prophecy guided them? Was it not because the hope of a great promise inspired them? Was it not because the Jewish nation looked forward to the time when "a Virgin should conceive and bear a Son" whose name should be "Emmanuel"?[1] Did not the expectation of this "sign of the Lord" colour the entire social and domestic life of the Jews; give a status to woman that she did not possess in any other country; and surround her with affection, honour, and love such as she obtained amongst no other peoples?[2] We cannot doubt it. The thought of the Messiah who was to come upheld the people of Israel and brought comfort to them in all their trials, in persecution, in slavery, and in exile "by the waters of Babylon"; and because of the Messiah, woman was honoured for the sake of the Mother who was to bear Him. It was the unseen influence of Mary Immaculate before she appeared as the "Morning Star" shining with clear, unclouded light upon a world of sin, and shame, and sorrow, which made for the uplifting and honour of the women of Israel; and what our Blessed Lady was to the women of her own race centuries before her birth, she has been to the world in general since the Incarnation. It is

[1] Isa. vii. 14.

[2] *Cf.* Nicolas, *op. cit.*, tome iv., pp. 311–316.

a characteristic of her work in the world of men who have been redeemed by her Divine Son. She has her share in the redemption of the human race, and part of that work has been accomplished by the sweet and hallowing influence of the Immaculate in the souls, and hearts, and lives of men who enslaved woman, and of women who were despised by men.

Mary is the type of all a mother should be; and since a mother's influence is lasting, since it makes for the uplifting or the deterioration of her children, and consequently of society, the mother who takes the Virgin-Mother as her model, who strives to imitate her, who moulds her life upon that of the Immaculate, becomes a force for good in the world. The Catholic Church holds up the Mother of God as the example to all Christian mothers, and the result is a Perpetua, a Monica, a Jane of Aza, an Elizabeth of Hungary.

Mary is the type of maidenhood. She is the *Virgo Virginum* and the *Virgo Veneranda* as well as the *Mater Inviolata* and the *Mater Amabilis*. As the highest type of purity and virginity she is held up by the Church for imitation. What has been the effect of her example? Agnes and Cecilia, Barbara and Lucy, amongst countless other virgins, in the early days of Christianity;

Catherine of Siena, Teresa of Jesus, Rose of Lima, and Clare in days nearer to our own.

The influence of Mary Immaculate for good has made itself felt in every age, in every country, amongst all peoples. Where there is true devotion to her and unswerving loyalty, there too do we find not only real piety, deep and intense love of her Son, reverence for spiritual things, and fervent love of God; we also find a more elevated standard of morality, and a greater refinement of thought. This arises from appreciation of the dignity and position of the Immaculate; it is also due to the recognition of the fact that the Mother of God is Mother of the human race. From childhood to old age, in all the trials of life, in times of sorrow, and in days of gladness, the image of the Virgin-Mother is ever clear and vivid before the eyes, and in the hearts of her clients, chastening and softening, winning and hallowing them. They who love our Lady look upon her as children look upon their mother, with love and reverence, with trust too, as their best friend and surest help. They pray to her, and call her "blessed amongst women"; and they beseech her to obtain from her Divine Son those graces which they need. She is "full of Grace": filled with the plenitude of God's gifts and graces herself, overflowing with Grace for those other children whom she must

bear and bring forth until "her days are accomplished," and the full number of those "whom God foreknew" have been made "conformable to the image of His Son."

We salute our Blessed Lady as the Mother of Divine Grace. We acknowledge that she possesses that Grace in full measure, and that she is furthermore the channel of Grace for us, the means through which the Holy Ghost effects His work of our salvation and sanctification. Hence our Blessed Lady occupies a position in the divine economy which is as unique as her personality. We cannot, we dare not, ignore her, or set her aside. She has her work to do in each individual soul. It is for us to recognise the fact, and to say, in the beautiful words of the poet of Christianity:

"Lady, thou art so great and of such might,
That he who seeks grace and turns not to thee,
Would have his prayer, all wingless, take its flight."[1]
(*Paradiso*, Canto xxxiii. Dean Plumptre's translation).

[1] *Donna, sei tanto grande, e tanto vali,*
Che qual vuol grazia, ed a te non ricorre,
Sua distanza vuol volar' senz' ali.

Chapter II

THE NATURE AND EFFECTS OF GRACE. MEANING OF THE TERM "FULL OF GRACE"

IF we would appreciate the claim of our Blessed Lady to the title "Mother of Divine Grace," we must understand as clearly as possible what is meant by Grace; what are its nature and effects; and what is signified by the term "full of Grace" as applied to the Mother of God.

Taken in its widest sense, Grace means a gift or favour freely and gratuitously bestowed by one person on another. Hence, in this sense, our nature, faculties, activities, and existence are graces which God has bestowed upon us, for we must all of us acknowledge that "He hath made us," as we are and what we are, and that He has given us these gifts freely and fully without any claim on our part to receive them.

In theological language, Grace is taken to mean that supernatural assistance given by God to man by which human life is uplifted to the sphere of

the supernatural, and human actions are rendered worthy of God's acceptance, to become under its influence the means by which man wins everlasting life and recompense. It is the gift which establishes proportion between human energy and God, as the Object of human intelligence and will, known and loved in a supernatural manner. We know that man can love God by his own natural power without the assistance of any supernatural energy; but such love is purely natural, and the natural outcome of the heart which recognises God as the Author of nature, and the Primal Cause of all things.[1]

Love is consequent upon knowledge, and the man who does not recognise that God is the Supreme Cause of all things, and therefore worthy of supreme love, is, as the Apostle tells us, inexcusable, since "the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; his eternal power also, and divinity."[2] But this knowledge and love, because purely natural, will not render man worthy of supernatural reward. There is no proportion between the act and the recompense. That which establishes the proportion is Divine Grace.

[1] *Cf. Sum. Theol.*, I.-II., Q. CIX., A. 3.

[2] Rom. i. 20.

NATURE AND EFFECTS OF GRACE

Grace is a supernatural gift, freely conferred by God upon the soul, uplifting it to the supernatural sphere, making it pleasing in God's sight, and rendering each action performed under its influence worthy of God's acceptance. Grace does these things because, as St. Thomas teaches, it is "a certain participation in the divine nature,"[1] and as the Prince of the Apostles had already taught long before the Angel of the Schools.[2] This gift far exceeds the natural exigencies of the soul. Its office is to uplift the soul to the region of the divine, and since it is "a certain participation in the divine nature" it achieves its purpose fully.

Grace is external and internal. The former does not directly affect the soul. It is an exterior impulse to good, such as good example, preaching, or some miraculous occurrence. Internal Grace, however, which is Grace properly speaking, directly affects the soul, either as a permanent abiding quality, as in the case of Habitual Grace, or by stirring up the mind and will, as Actual Graces do.

This internal Grace comprises the two great

[1] *Sum. Theol.*, I.-II., Q. CXII., A. 1.

[2] "By whom he hath given us most great and precious promises; that by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. i. 4).

divisions: *Gratia gratum faciens*, or Sanctifying Grace, that makes us pleasing to God and acceptable in His sight; and *Gratia gratis data*, Grace that is bestowed gratuitously, not so much for the personal sanctification of the recipient as for the well-being of others.

Gratia gratum faciens is either habitual—that is, it becomes a supernatural temper of soul, from the fact that it abides and inheres in the soul permanently, and makes for the soul's continual progress in virtue and perfection—or it is an actual supernatural energy, conferred at a particular time and for a particular purpose. Habitual Grace means constant friendship with God, in that the soul continually enjoys the "participation in the divine nature"; and it confers upon us the right, not indeed the strict and rigorous but the conditional right, to the kingdom of heaven.

Another aspect of Grace is that of Preventing and Subsequent Grace. "The first effect of Grace in the soul," says St. Thomas, "is that of healing. The second effect is the soul's desire for good. The third, that the good which is desired is efficaciously striven for. The fourth, that the soul perseveres in well-doing. The fifth, that the soul reaches heaven. Grace, therefore, in that it produces in us the first effect, is called

Preventing Grace in relation to the second effect; but in so far as it causes the second effect, it is called Subsequent Grace in relation to the first effect."[1]

Grace is not Charity, for Grace is the effect of God's love, while Charity is the virtue by which we love Him, and it presupposes the presence of Grace in the soul. Neither is Grace identical with the Theological virtues of Faith and Hope, nor with the acquired or infused virtues. Acquired virtues pertain to the Natural, Grace to the Supernatural, order;[2] Infused virtues are the resultants of Grace, and spring from it as from their source and principle; while a sinner may still possess the virtues of Faith and Hope though by his sins he has forfeited the Grace of God. The difference between Grace and Charity is well put by Cardinal Cajetan, O.P.: "Grace is as the root, Charity the fruit. Grace constitutes us sons of God formally, Charity makes us sons of God in act; for Grace is the principle of

[1] *Sum. Theol.*, I.-II., Q. CXI., A. 3: *cf.* Billuart, *Summa Sancti Thomæ*, tome iii., *De Gratia.*, diss. v., a. 1.

[2] Acquired virtues may also pertain to the supernatural order if the motive which urges their acquisition is a supernatural one. Thus, patience may be a purely natural virtue, acquired by repeated acts; but if anyone sets himself to acquire this virtue because it is pleasing to God, it is lifted to the sphere of the supernatural and so merits a supernatural reward.

our participation in the divine nature, while Charity is the principle of our activity according to that participated nature."[1]

From the nature of Habitual Grace we learn that it is no mere external adornment of soul through belief and trust in Jesus Christ. It is something interior and intrinsic, something which abides and inheres in the soul. It is a permanent quality abiding in the soul, making for its continual renovation and perfection, cleansing and beautifying this "temple of God," by uprooting and destroying sin, by kindling the fire of divine charity, and by giving a certain spontaneity and facility to the practice of virtue. Through Grace we become members of the household of the saints, nay, members of the household of God, since, by conferring upon us the sonship of adoption, it makes us the "offspring of God."[2]

God, therefore, is the chief *Efficient Cause* of Grace. He alone can forgive sin, confer the sonship of adoption, and give the right to the eternal recompense, since He is the Creator and Ruler of mankind. But, as the Evangelist tells us: *Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*;[3] and as

[1] Comment in I.-II., Q. CXI., A. 3.

[2] Acts xvii. 20. *Cf. L'Habitation du Saint Esprit dans les Âmes Justes*, par Le Père Froget, O.P., 2nd ed., pp. 268, *sqq.* Paris, 1900.

[3] John i. 17.

our Lord Himself has said, "*I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life*,"[1] it follows that He also is a Cause of Grace. The Sacred Humanity is the chief Moral Cause of Grace, for Christ merited it in the most absolute and rigorous sense. The Sacred Humanity is also the Physical Instrumental Cause of Grace. Every act of our Divine Lord was of infinite worth because of the union of the Divine and the Human natures in the One Person; and it is in view of the merits of Jesus Christ—merits which are of infinite value because He is the Word made flesh—that God has inclined towards us and has hearkened to our petitions. These petitions of ours ascend to Him weighted with "the strong cry," the yearning, the hardships, and weariness of the Man-God; weighted still more heavily with the cry for souls that was wrung from Him on the Cross. He has merited by His life and death that we shall be accounted His brethren, members of His mystical Body, children, therefore, of His Eternal Father, not strangers to Him. By the Grace which He has merited for us we are justified, as St. Paul says: *Being justified freely by His Grace, through the redemption, that is in Christ Jesus.*[2] And Jesus Christ is also the Physical Instrumental Cause of Grace. In the days of His mortal life, *Virtue*

[1] *Ibid.* xiv. 6. [2] Rom. iii. 24.

went out from Him and healed all.[1] It did not require actual physical contact with our Lord for the working of a miracle; the "virtue went out from Him," the Incarnate God, and the miracle was wrought. Thus did He cure the Ruler's daughter,[2] and raise Lazarus from his four days' sleep of death.[3] Thus is He the cause of Grace now. Virtue still goes out from Him, "the Man Christ Jesus." He does not come into actual physical contact with the soul, but as the sun in the heavens makes the seed to germinate though it is hidden in the earth, and while it experiences the sun's influence, is not in actual touch with it, so does the human soul receive Grace through the "virtue," energy, power, of the Incarnate Word.[4]

Through the Grace which Jesus Christ has merited for us, and of which He is the cause in the manner stated, we also are enabled to merit, because of the proportion that is established between the actions we perform under the influence of this Grace, and the supernatural reward that is held out to us. But while "*of His fulness we have all received*,"[5] we have not all received in like

[1] Luke vi. 19. [2] John. iv. 47–52.
[3] *Ibid.* xi. 1–45.
[4] *Cf.* Billuart, *op. cit.*, *De Incarnatione*, Diss. xiii., A. 2.
[5] John ii. 16.

measure. Some receive in fuller measure than others, for Grace is built upon the foundation of nature, and is given in view of the position to be occupied and the work to be accomplished. It transforms the soul and its powers, but it does not distort them; for though Grace is supernatural it is not unnatural. Amongst the countless thousands to whom God gives His Grace, there are some in whose souls it has full sway. These souls are so transfigured by Grace that their holiness becomes heroic. They are the Saints of God. Pre-eminent amongst them is she who is named the Queen of Saints, Mary, the Virgin Mother of God. Like a "cedar in Libanus," Mary Immaculate stands above all other creatures as one apart, alone in her sanctity and perfection, which is wholly due to the "fulness of Grace" she received from God, a plenitude of Grace that uplifts her to the very verge of the Divinity.

What our Blessed Lady is—the fairest product of God's creative power, always, of course, excepting the Sacred Humanity of Jesus Christ—is wholly and absolutely the effect of the Sanctifying Grace conferred upon her. It has made her "a living and smiling invitation to virtue. Around her, one already foresees the whole company of the elect. Distant or near, feeling her influence

from afar or kneeling at her feet, all will receive through her the celestial gift: sinners rescued by at last yielding to her admonitions; innocents sanctified through the eager acceptance of all her counsels; all those who shall find her, shall find life, and shall partake of the Grace which proceeds from the Lord."[1]

When the Angel made known to Our Lady God's choice of her to be the Mother of His Son, he addressed her as "full of Grace." What is the significance of this expression as applied to the Blessed Virgin? Are we to understand that when Gabriel addressed her, our Lady had arrived at such a height of perfection that any further advance was precluded?

There are different degrees of plenitude. There is Absolute Plenitude which does not admit of greater because it is infinite. Such plenitude is divine, and such plenitude belonged to Jesus Christ as the universal and efficacious principle of supernatural life for all men. No one can be saved except by and through Him; and we cannot conceive of greater fulness of Grace than that which the soul of Jesus received because of its union with the Word.

There is the Plenitude of Sufficiency, common

[1] *The Blessed Virgin Mary*, by René-Marie de la Broise, S.J., English translation, pp. 23-4. London, 1917.

to all God's servants, by means of which they are enabled to perform meritorious acts that will win eternal reward.

There is the Plenitude of Abundance, when the soul is so filled with Grace that it overflows upon others. This was the unique privilege of the Mother of God.

Furthermore, so long as we are wayfarers on the road to perfection, progress in perfection is possible. Our Blessed Lady was no exception. The words of St. Luke in regard to her Son may be applied to herself: She "advanced . . . in wisdom and grace." Her initial perfection was not so great as her perfection when she became Mother of God; and her "fulness of Grace" at the end of her life was greater than the plenitude of Grace possessed by her at the instant of her Immaculate Conception, greater also than her plenitude of Grace when she "conceived of the Holy Ghost" and "the Word was made flesh" in her womb.

What the plenitude of Grace made for in the life of our Blessed Lady, what its effects were in her soul, we shall reverently attempt to discuss, for in doing so we shall learn that she is in very truth Mother of Divine Grace. One fact we must ever keep in view: Mary is Mother of God. This title, this position, explains everything; and

in the words of St. Thomas of Villanova, we may truly ask: "What beauty, what virtue, what perfection, what grace, what glory is not befitting the Mother of God?"[1]

[1] "*Quænam . . . pulchritudo, quænam virtus, quæ perfectio, quæ gratia, quæ gloria Matri Dei non congruit?*" (Sermo II, *De Nativitate Virginis.*)

Chapter III

THE GRACE CONFERRED ON OUR BLESSED LADY IN PREPARATION FOR HER OFFICE

GOD decreed the Incarnation as the means by which the human race, estranged from Him through the deceits of Satan, should be redeemed; and the Incarnation meant that God should become man really and actually, not figuratively only or in semblance. A human mother, therefore, was required; and, as God does nothing by chance, He chose one woman from amongst all other women to be the Mother from whom He should receive the human nature He had willed to assume. Such choice meant predestination: and by the fact that a woman had been so predestined by God, "He at once separated her morally from the rest of mankind. Having resolved to become incarnate and to suffer to redeem all men, He intended that His Mother should first of all receive the full benefit of His redeeming power; He wished not merely to raise her, with others, from the original fall,

but to preserve her beforehand and entirely from it; so that, always beautiful and pleasing to the eyes of God, always in His light, always near Him, she might occupy by His side the place predestined for the Mother of God, and participate in all His glory."[1]

The predestination of the woman chosen by God to be His Mother was gratuitous. She was not chosen on account of any merits or perfections she possessed and which were foreseen by God. No creature could ever possibly merit such an office in the strict sense of the term; and when we find the expression used by some of the Fathers, or in the Liturgical Prayers of the Church, we must ever remember that it has reference to congruous merit, not to merit strictly so called. In other words, when we find it stated that the Blessed Virgin "merited to become the Mother of God," we are to understand that she corresponded so perfectly with Grace as to make it fitting that she should receive the ineffable Grace of the Divine Maternity.[2] All the perfection, sanctity, and subsequent glory of our Blessed Lady was the result of this predestination by God, for such predestination, as we shall see later, implied

[1] *The Blessed Virgin Mary*, by de la Broise, p. 3.

[2] *Cf. Tractatus de Beatissima Virgine Maria, Matre Dei*, by Father Lepicier, O.S.M., pp. 18–19. Paris, 1901.

predilection. In the fullest sense of the words could Mary have said: *By the Grace of God I am what I am: and His Grace in me hath not been void.*[1]

But we must beware of imagining that God's Grace made our Lady what she was despite herself, and that she became so marvellously perfect because she could not have been anything else. In the words of Father Faber: "Mary was no mere monument of marvels upon which God has hung external dignities, and endless banners, and figurative emblems, and the external spoils of a redeemed world. The bewildering glory outside —and truly was it bewildering—was as nothing compared to that which was within. Mary was a creature, a woman, a mother, a sufferer; and by stupendous correspondence to them, she had made God's gifts her own."[2]

Like every other creature, Mary had the power to accept or reject the gifts of God. She possessed the radical power of rejecting the initial Grace she received, otherwise she would not have been free. But she corresponded with that Grace so fully, that she merited still further Grace, still further perfection; and hence, while all her perfections are from God, they are also "Mary's own self, her own human, characteristic, loving, quiet self."[3]

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 10.

[2] *The Foot of the Cross*, 9th ed., p. 365.

[3] *Ibid.*

We can understand that God would prepare her whom He had chosen from eternity to be the Mother of His Son. We can further understand that this preparation would be unique since she herself was unique, *the* woman chosen from amongst all others as the link which should unite God with man. This preparation began with the initial Grace, initial in the order of time, of an Immaculate Conception. Mary is the Immaculate Conception.

The doctrine which teaches that, in the first instant of her conception, "Mary, by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God and in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, was preserved from every stain of Original Sin,"[1] is a doctrine which is not only in perfect harmony with the mystery of the Incarnation, but one which is eminently reasonable. The Son of God became man that He might redeem mankind and destroy the power which Satan exercised over the human race. Would it have been fitting that the Mother who was to minister to Him His human nature should ever, even for a fleeting instant, have been stained by sin? Would Mary's preparation for the Divine Maternity have been worthy of God if she had ever been under the thraldom of His enemy? God could preserve her He had chosen

[1] Words of the Bull *Ineffabilis Deus*.

for His Mother from the blighting curse of sin which fell upon every other creature: Dare we say that He would not preserve her? God's very choice of her to be His mother urges us to expect that the law which was made for all others would not affect her, and that the sentence pronounced upon every other child of Adam would be suspended in her case. *Holiness becometh thy house, O Lord*, exclaims the Psalmist,[1] and surely "the holiness that becometh the actual House of God should be something more than the patched-up sanctity which overlies a foundation of original corruption."[2]

The dignity of the Son and the position of the Mother demanded that she should be preserved from all taint of sin. This is expressed in the words of the Promise made in Genesis, where God, addressing the tempter, said:

> I will put enmities between thee and the woman,
> And thy seed and her seed:
> She shall crush thy head,
> And thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.[3]

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[1] xcii. 5.

[2] *Meditations on Christian Dogma*, by Bishop Bellord, vol. i., p. 333. London, C.T.S., 1898.

[3] iii. 15. It is of but little moment whether the reading be "Ipse" or "Ipsum" instead of the "Ipsa" of the Vulgate. The Church has never taught, though Protestantism would have us believe that she has, that Mary *of herself* possessed the power

These words quite evidently refer to a woman who should undo the wrong the first woman had done. They signalise not "a" but "the" woman between whom and the Spirit of Evil there has been established everlasting enmity. Not only will the Spirit of Evil never exercise any dominion over "the woman," on the contrary, she shall possess full supremacy over and shall crush Satan; and "her seed," her Son in a very special and exclusive sense, since He shall be born of her without human intervention, shall destroy the empire of sin in the souls of Eve's descendants. The complete and absolute triumph of "the woman" and her seed over sin and Satan is promised by God. That the triumph may be absolute, absolute immunity is necessary. Hence God promised that His Son, and the Mother of whom He should be born, should never, at any moment of their existence, be under the dominion of Satan.[1]

But let us guard against an error into which

to crush the serpent's head. Her power, like her perfection, is wholly the effect of God's love and predestination. Whatever reading is accepted, one outstanding fact remains: the woman and her seed *conjointly* are placed in antagonism to the serpent and its seed: Christ and His Mother are united against Satan, and with them are also joined all who acknowledge the sovereignty of Jesus and Mary. *Cf.* à Lapide, *Comment in Genesim, in loco*; de la Broise, *The Blessed Virgin Mary*, p. 9, note.

[1] *Cf.* Lepicier, *op. cit.*, pp. 95–97.

some have fallen. While the Divine Maternity of our Blessed Lady demands an Immaculate Conception as a fitting preparation for her position, it does not demand it as a necessary condition. We are not to imagine that God preserved His Mother from all taint of sin in order that His Son might be preserved. Our Lord's Conception was wholly miraculous. His immunity was assured in that He " was conceived of the Holy Ghost." Hence, even if our Blessed Lady had not been Immaculate, even if she had not been preserved from the stain of Original Sin, her Divine Son would not have been affected, because His Conception was wholly supernatural, wholly miraculous; it was not human but divine.[1]

The Immaculate Conception, marvellous privilege though it is, is nevertheless only the beginning and the negative side of the Graces conferred by God upon His Blessed Mother. She was not merely preserved from sin in the first instant of her rational existence, but was endowed with virtues so great and glorious, and was filled with Grace so completely as to deserve the title " full of Grace " while yet unborn.

Just because our Blessed Lady was chosen by God to be His Mother was she loved by Him above all other creatures. She was the " fairest

[1] *Cf.* Lepicier, *op. cit.*, pp. 87–88.

among women," and the "perfect one," because she was the chosen one. Now God's love is creative. He creates the beauty and perfection which He sees and loves in the creature. He pours Himself out on the creature He loves and endows it with every perfection; while the greater His love is, the greater will be the perfection He confers upon the object of His love; for, as St. Thomas teaches: "That God should love one more than another is simply that He wills greater good for such a one; God's will is the cause of good in created things."[1] Hence, because of the position she was to occupy, our Blessed Lady was loved by God more than all others, and because she was so loved she was endowed with greater perfection. Hence her Immaculate Conception.[2]

As has been said, this privilege, marvellous though it was, was but the negative side of our Lady's initial perfection. She was preserved from all stain of Original Sin by reason of the Immaculate Conception: was her soul not endowed at the same instant with such Grace that even then she was "full of Grace"? We take the

[1] *Sum. Theol.*, Ia Pars, Q. XX., A. 4.

[2] It is worthy of remark that St. Vincent Ferrer, O.P., was an ardent preacher of the Immaculate Conception. *Cf. Œuvres de Saint Vincent Ferrier*, edited by Père Fages, O.P., tome i., p. 157. Paris, 1909.

principle laid down by St. Thomas that our Lady received disposing Grace " by which she was made worthy to be the Mother of Christ,"[1] and reply in the affirmative. In the first instant of her Immaculate Conception our Blessed Lady was " full of Grace ": not, indeed, full with the fulness of Grace which excluded any progress, but with the fulness necessary to prepare her from the beginning for her position as Mother of God. The question now occurs: What was the extent of this initial plenitude of Grace? Was it greater than the consummated perfection of Angels and Saints individually? Was it greater than the consummated perfection of Angels and Saints collectively?

The majority of theologians agree that the initial Grace and perfection of our Blessed Lady exceeded the consummated perfection of Angels and Saints taken individually. This is the teaching of Suarez,[2] and of one of the earliest commentators on the Litany of Loretto, Father Justin of Miechow, O.P.,[3] to mention but two theologians. Their teaching is eminently reasonable. Our

[1] *Sum. Theol.*, IIIa. Pars, Q. XXVII., A. 5., ad. 2.

[2] *De Mysteriis Vitæ Christi*, dist. 4, s. 1.

[3] *Discursus Predicabiles super Litanias Lauretaneas.* French version *Conférences sur les Litanies*, by L'Abbé Ricard, Conf. 13.4 Paris, 1868.

Blessed Lady had been chosen from eternity to be Mother of God. No other creature had been chosen for such an exalted position, and God gives His Grace in proportion to the position to which He has destined the creature. Consequently, when our Blessed Lady had been destined by the Eternal to occupy a position that was unique, a position with which no other can compare, the Grace she received as a preparation for that position must have been incomparably greater than the Graces bestowed upon any other creature. From all eternity our Lady had been loved by God beyond all other creatures as the chosen one, who should cradle in her bosom the Word made flesh, therefore did she receive greater Graces from the beginning than any other creature ever received.[1]

There is not the same unanimity in regard to the second question: Was the initial Grace conferred upon our Blessed Lady greater than the consummated grace and perfection of Angels and Saints taken collectively? Some theologians do not treat the question at all; others do not consider that the arguments in favour of it are convincing; while others are frankly opposed to the doctrine.

[1] *Cf.* Père Hugon, O.P., *La Mère de Grâce*, pp. 19–24, Paris, 1904; Père Terrien, S.J., *La Mère de Dieu et la Mère des Hommes*, vol. i., pp. 386–388, Paris, 1900; Lepicier, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

St. Alphonsus Ligouri, however, is a zealous upholder of it;[1] and it would seem that St. Vincent Ferrer also inclines to the affirmative view.[2] Vega, S.J., expressly teaches it,[3] while Contenson, O.P., makes it his own.[4] It seems to us that the arguments in support of the first statement are equally applicable to the second. God loved our Blessed Lady more than and above all other creatures, therefore He endowed her with Grace in a measure that far exceeded the Graces received by all others. There is absolutely no comparison between the consummated perfection of Angels and Saints collectively, and the perfection due to her whom God had chosen to be His Mother that she might be rendered worthy of the position she was to fill. The position and dignity of the chosen Mother of God was such that from the beginning it placed her above all mere creatures and nearest to the divine. No perfection or Grace could be too great for such a being; nor would the accumulated Graces of all creatures ever render that being worthy of the office of Mother of God. The position was unique. So also was the perfection of her who held it; for that

[1] *The Glories of Mary*, part ii., discourse ii. London, 1852.
[2] *Op. cit., Sermo de Conceptione B. Virginis*, p. 157.
[3] *Theol. Mariana*, n. 1160.
[4] *Theol. Mentis et Cordis*, lib. x., diss. 6, cap. 8, sp. 2 primo.

perfection disposed and prepared her, from the first moment of her existence, to be worthy of conceiving the Word of God in her womb. Yet such stupendous Grace did not prevent further increase or advancement. It was but a disposing Grace; merely a preparation for still greater Grace to be conferred, especially when our Blessed Lady actually became Mother of God, what time the "Word was made flesh." It was not infinite but finite Grace, and being so, it was capable of increase—an increase especially at the moment of the Miraculous Conception; a still greater increase at the hour of our Lady's death.

Chapter IV

CONSEQUENCES OF THE INITIAL PERFECTION OF OUR BLESSED LADY

WHEN our Blessed Lady received the initial Grace which God conferred upon her in the first instant of her Immaculate Conception, not only was her soul sanctified, it was also adorned by the presence of infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost. These virtues and gifts are as inseparably connected with Sanctifying Grace as light and heat with the sun; while their intensity corresponds with the degree of Grace which has been conferred. Our Blessed Lady, we have said, received an extraordinary degree of Grace. Her initial perfection was incomparably greater than the consummated perfection of Angels and Saints. Hence she possessed the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost in an heroic degree, for heroic virtue alone could correspond and be in keeping with the extraordinary initial Grace conferred upon her as the chosen Mother of God.

It is the teaching of the Fathers that, when our first parents were created, their souls were enriched by the possession and presence of infused virtue. Can we believe that our Blesssed Lady would have been less nobly dowered than they were? If Eve was created perfect, can we hesitate to believe that the Second Eve, who had been "chosen from of old and before the world was made" to repair the havoc wrought by our first mother, should have been created equally perfect? Not only does our love of God's Mother urge us to accept this doctrine, but our sense of what was fitting, and our appreciation of our Lady's dignity and position, force us to acknowledge its reasonableness.

Now the Church teaches that, in consequence of Adam's sin, our nature was corrupted. Man fell from the original justice in which he had been created, and in falling, he lost those perfections which had been conferred upon him. This loss not only entailed the loss of those supernatural gifts he had received from God, it further entailed a disorganisation and discord, because it destroyed the perfect harmony of his being. His intelligence was darkened; his will was weakened; and reason was hampered in its guidance by an undue preponderance of the passions: hence ignorance, and concupiscence, and rebellious passions—

those destroying elements which have waged war against man's higher and nobler faculties through all time. One creature was exempt from this universal corruption. Because our Blessed Lady was Immaculate in her Conception she was not deprived of that original justice in which our first parents had been created. Consequently, neither her intelligence nor her will was affected as the intelligence and will of every other being have been affected; while perfect harmony, the result of the complete subordination of the inferior powers to reason, and of reason to God, reigned in all its beauty. The supernatural perfections which had been conferred upon our first parents when they were created, but which they had lost, and of which their descendants had also been deprived in consequence of Adam's sin; the infused virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity, and the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Ghost, all these enriched the soul of the Immaculate. She received these perfections as Eve had received them: but because she ever remained in the state of original justice in which she had been created, she retained the perfections which Eve had forfeited.[1]

Can we go further and attribute still greater perfection of intelligence to our Blessed Lady,

[1] *Cf.* Terrien, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., pp. 1–9; Hugon, *op. cit.*, pp. 21–32.

by asserting that she enjoyed the use of reason and free will while she was yet unborn?

There are two principles to guide us in determining the extent of our Lady's privileges. First, that whatever Grace or privilege was conferred upon any of God's servants was also conferred, and in a more perfect manner, upon the chosen Mother of God. Second, that she received all those privileges and perfections it was fitting she should receive that she might be made worthy for her position. In each case, however, the privileges and prerogatives were conditioned by our Lady's position as a creature, a woman who, moreover, was still a wayfarer; and they were further conditioned by their compatibility with the teaching of Scripture and the Church. For example, the power to consecrate would seem to be a fitting privilege in her to whom we are indebted for Jesus Christ made man; but this power is the exclusive privilege of men, and no woman, not even the Immaculate Mother of Jesus, received it.

The principles laid down have been suggested by St. Thomas, when, speaking of our Lady's sanctification in her mother's womb, he says: "It is reasonable to believe that she who bore *the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth*, should receive greater privileges of Grace

than all other creatures. . . . But we find that this privilege was conferred upon others. . . . Wherefore, it is reasonable to believe that the Blessed Virgin was sanctified before her birth.[1] St. Antoninus, O.P., Archbishop of Florence, says: "When we speak of favours, this principle, a self-evident one, should guide us: that every favour conferred upon any creature was also conferred upon the Mother of God."[2] It is the express teaching of Suarez,[3] and of many other theologians.[4]

We open the Gospel, and in St. Luke's account of our Lady's visit to her kinswoman, St. Elizabeth, we read that St. Elizabeth said to her: "For behold as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy."[5] The Fathers of the Church commenting upon this passage teach that the leaping for joy of the unborn Precursor of Jesus Christ cannot be explained or understood apart from the child's actual intelligence and recognition of the presence of his unborn Master. According to this teaching, not only was St. John sanctified in his mother's womb, but further, he received the use of reason

[1] *Sum. Theol.*, IIIa Pars, Q. XXVII., A. 1.

[2] *Summa*, pars iv., tit. 15, c. 10, *De Triplici Gen. Grat.*, 2 *ap.* Terrien, *op. cit.*, vol. i., p. 308.

[3] *De Myst. Vit. Christi*, d. 4, s. 1.

[4] *Cf.* Terrien, *op. cit.*, pp. 309–330.

[5] i. 44.

at the same moment. This teaching is borne out by the words of the Breviary Hymn in the office of St. John the Baptist. It is still further confirmed by the explicit teaching of the Saints and Doctors of the Church. St. Leo tells us that "John, the future Precursor of Christ, received the gift of prophecy while he was yet in his mother's womb, and even before his birth he testified, by his joyful movement, to the Mother of the Lord."[1] But St. Thomas says that: "No one is to be considered a prophet whose intelligence has not been enlightened for judgment."[2] Hence, in testifying to the presence of Jesus in Mary's womb by leaping for joy in the womb of his mother, St. John prophesied, and in prophesying, showed that, while yet unborn, he had received enlightenment from on high, and the use of his rational powers.

Shall we deny to the future Mother of God a Grace conferred upon the Precursor of her Son? Shall we say that she who was to minister to the Word of God that human nature in which He was to redeem the world was less favoured by God than John, who was but a "voice crying in the wilderness"? Our sense of what was fitting in our Lady's case, and the principles given for

[1] Serm. 30, *in Nat. Domini.* Pat. Lat. vol. liv., 232.
[2] *Sum. Theol.*, II.-II., Q. CLXXIII., A. 2.

our guidance in determining the extent of her privileges, urge us to believe that, if the Baptist was thus favoured in his mother's womb, so also was our Blessed Lady. In accepting this teaching we accept what some of the greatest Saints and most saintly theologians have explicitly taught. St. Vincent Ferrer, of whom we have already spoken as an upholder of the Immaculate Conception, gives as a reason for it this very fact that our Lady had the use of her rational faculties from the beginning. "The sanctification of Mary ever Virgin occurred . . . in the instant that her body was formed and her soul was created, for she then possessed her rational powers and was capable of being sanctified."[1] St. Francis de Sales emphatically states that our Lady "possessed the use of reason from the moment when her soul was united to her body which was formed in the womb of St. Anne."[2] It is scarcely necessary to say that it is also the teaching of St. Alphonsus.[3] Suarez,[4] St. Bernardine of Siena,[5] Cardinal

[1] "*Sanctificatio Virginis Mariæ . . . fuit in momento formato corpore, et anima creata, quia tunc fuit rationalis, et, capax sanctificationis, fuit sanctificata*" (*Sermo de Conceptione Virg. Mariæ op. cit.*, p. 157).

[2] Serm. 38, *For the Feast of the Presentation.*

[3] *Glories of Mary*, part ii., dis. 3.

[4] *De Myst. Vit. Christi*, d. 4, s. 7.

[5] Serm. 4, *De Concept. B. Mariæ.*

Cajetan,[1] Contenson,[2] and Justin of Miechow hold the same opinion.[3]

St. Thomas, it is true, claims that the use of reason from the first moment of conception was the exclusive privilege of our Divine Lord;[4] but, as Cajetan shows, the words of the Angelic Doctor are not to be taken as a denial that our Lady had any use of her rational faculties while yet unborn, especially in the instant when her soul and body were united. St. Thomas implies that the Blessed Virgin did not enjoy the permanent and habitual use of reason in her mother's womb.[5]

Yet the Angelic Doctor, in another Question, gives us the theological principles upon which the arguments in support of this privilege of Mary Immaculate are founded. "Christ was sanctified by Grace in the first instant of His Conception. Now there is a twofold sanctification, that of adults who are sanctified by their own act; that of children who are not sanctified by their own act of faith, but by the faith of their parents and of the Church. The first is more perfect than the second sanctification. . . . Since, therefore, the sancti-

[1] *Comm. in* IIIa Pars, Q. XXVII., A. 3.
[2] *Theol. Mentis et Cordis*, lib. x., diss. 6, c. i., sp. 2.
[3] *Op. cit.*, Conf. 93.
[4] *Sum. Theol.*, IIIa Pars, Q. XXVII., A. 3.
[5] *Comm. in* IIIa Pars, Q. XXVII., A. 3.

fication of Christ was most perfect, because He was sanctified that He might sanctify others, it follows that He was sanctified by a movement of His own free-will towards God. As such a movement of the will is meritorious, it follows that Christ merited in the first instant of His Conception."[1]

We argue now by analogy in regard to our Blessed Lady: the initial Grace which she received was, as has been stated, incomparably greater than the consummated perfection of Angels and Saints. Such a Grace necessitates its reception by the soul in at least as perfect a manner as the Grace by which adults are sanctified; they, as St. Thomas teaches, are sanctified by their own act, by the exercise of their own rational faculties. Hence we infer that, when our Blessed Lady received the initial Grace of sanctification, she also received the use of her rational powers that she might co-operate with God and merit still further Grace, still greater perfection.

And again, if the Blessed Virgin did not possess the use of reason at the moment of her Immaculate Conception, the extraordinary initial Grace conferred upon her at that moment would have remained passive and inactive until such time as her reason awakened, and, by a conscious act, the

[1] *Sum. Theol.*, IIIa. Pars, Q. XXXIV., A. 3.

initial Grace had been quickened into life and activity in her soul. When we consider how marvellous that initial Grace was, and how unique amongst God's creatures was the soul upon which it had been conferred, it appears impossible that it should have remained dormant and without energy even for one instant, but demanded from the beginning that other privilege of being used, because the soul that received the Grace had also received, at the same instant, the use of reason.[1]

It is useless to object that, in granting this privilege to the Mother, we lessen the dignity of the Son. Jesus Christ had an absolute right to it. His Blessed Mother had no such right. The privilege, like every other Grace she received, was the outcome of God's love of, and preference for, her whom He had chosen from eternity to be His Mother.

Whether the privilege was permanent, or whether it was only a transient enlightenment, as Cajetan holds it to have been, is a question upon which theologians are divided. St. Francis de Sales,[2] St. Alphonsus,[3] and St. Bernardine of Siena,[4] are in favour of the opinion that our Lady

[1] *Cf.* Hugon, *op. cit.*, pp. 38–43; Terrien, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., l. v. c. 1.

[2] Serm. 16, *For the Feast of the Presentation.*

[3] *Ut supra.*

[4] *Ut supra.*

enjoyed the use of reason *habitually* throughout her life, from the instant when she first began to use her rational faculties in the womb of St. Anne. Father Terrien supports this teaching;[1] so also does Father Hugon, who bases his teaching upon the nature of the initial Grace which our Blessed Lady received. It was so unique, so extraordinary, that it could not remain inactive as it would have done if the use of reason had been only a passing gift, a transient illumination. Grace so extraordinary demanded the continual use of our Lady's rational powers, if she was to satisfy her ardent desire for sanctity which that initial Grace had awakened in her soul. And why should God take back what He had given? His graces and gifts, as St. Paul tells us, "are without repentance."[2] What God has once freely bestowed upon a soul for its sanctification and perfection is never withdrawn by Him, unless, as it were, He is forced to take back His gifts because the soul despises them. It is not more difficult for Him to preserve habitually in the soul a privilege He has once conferred upon it; and, granted that He endowed her who was to be His Mother "in the fulness of time" with the use of reason and free-will long before such use was due, it was a privilege she enjoyed because of His love for her. Why should

[1] *Op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 30. [2] Rom. xi. 29.

God refuse to make that privilege habitual? Would not the continual use of reason make for our Blessed Lady's greater perfection, and render her more worthy of being the Mother of God? And does not the Angelic Doctor teach that "everything that was by way of a perfection should be found in the Most Holy Virgin"?[1] By the continual use of her rational powers Mary was made capable of meriting continually still greater Grace, until at last she was hailed by God's messenger as *Gratia plena*, "Full of Grace."

[1] iv., diss. 30, Q. II., art. i., sol. 1.

Chapter V

THE GRACES CONFERRED ON OUR BLESSED LADY WHEN SHE BECAME MOTHER OF GOD

WE have seen that our Blessed Lady was endowed by God with the use of her rational faculties from the first instant of her Immaculate Conception, and that there are good and solid reasons for believing that this privilege was not transitory but permanent. It necessarily follows that our Lady's knowledge was in the strict sense infused knowledge—that is, it was directly and immediately caused by God, independent, therefore, in its origin and activity, of all co-operation of the organism. For we do not suggest that the Immaculate was fully and perfectly formed from the beginning; or that the organs were fully developed; or that while yet unborn she could receive impressions, consequently knowledge, as she would in after life receive them, through the medium of the senses. The Blessed Virgin was a marvel of Grace, which, in view of what she was to be, was conferred upon her in an extraordinary manner. Hence, as

Father Terrien well says: "God, who formed Christ in the Virginal Womb of Mary without man's co-operation, could make a human intelligence fruitful without the co-operation of sensory images."[1]

This infused knowledge, therefore, possessed certain characteristics.

It was wholly interior. There was no external manifestation of the knowledge possessed by our Blessed Lady. Externally she was in all things a normal child: "All the glory of the king's daughter was within."[2] It was uninterrupted.

No distracting thoughts or images had any power to interrupt the communion of our Lady's soul with God. He, the "First and only Fair," was discerned as such by her whom He had made "all fair." Nothing could come between the clear vision of the Immaculate and God Who had made her so: and the words of the Spouse in the Canticle of Canticles were applicable to our Lady in a special and pre-eminent degree: "I sleep, and my heart watcheth."[3]

And it was unwearied. Just because the knowledge was independent of all co-operation of the senses or brain, there was no lassitude, no weariness. The exercise of our intelligence causes weariness,

[1] *Op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 35.
[2] Ps. xliv. 14. [3] V. 2.

not because the mind itself grows tired: the mind or intelligence, being a spiritual faculty, does not experience those drawbacks inseparable from what is material: we grow wearied because our material organism grows weary; the lower faculties, being what they are, cannot co-operate indefinitely with our highest powers. But there was no question of any such co-operation of the inferior powers in the knowledge possessed by our Blessed Lady. It was infused, therefore untrammelled by sensory images, and placed no tax upon the organism. Hence, while our Lady in after life acquired knowledge like every other creature through contact with the outside world, that infused knowledge, that clear vision of God, remained undisturbed. Her life, therefore, was one of uninterrupted communion with God which nothing could break.

In saying this, however, we are not to think that such contemplation, such communion, was an obstacle to the ordinary activity of our Blessed Lady in her daily life. The Gospels, in the few instances in which mention is made of her, show our Lady to us, not as one lost in ecstatic contemplation, but as one who took her full share in external works. At the marriage of Cana "the Mother of Jesus was there."[1] She fulfilled all

[1] John ii. 1.

the requirements of the Mosaic Law.[1] And at the hour when more than any other time we might expect to find her utterly absorbed in contemplation, the hour when first her ravished gaze fell upon her Divine Child, we are clearly given to understand that, while she adored Him, her contemplation did not hinder her in the performance of all and more than all the duties of a mother. She "wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger."[2]

This continual contemplation of, and union with, God, meant a constant, actual correspondence with Grace; uninterrupted progress in perfection; and an ever-increasing store of merit until the "fulness of time" decreed by the Eternal had arrived, and His messenger greeted the Virgin of Nazareth with the salutation: "Hail! full of Grace." At that moment God's preparation of our Blessed Lady was complete. By her perfect correspondence with the ineffable graces with which God had endowed her, Mary was now worthy to be Mother of God. His love for her had been so wonderful, that of her alone amongst all creatures could it be said: "Thou art all fair, and there is no spot in thee."[3]

How far-reaching and comprehensive in its

[1] Luke ii. 22.
[2] *Ibid.* 7.
[3] Cant. of Canticles, iv. 7.

effects was the Grace received by our Blessed Lady, and how the whole being of the Immaculate, body as well as soul, responded to and was influenced by that Grace, we shall consider when we discuss our Lady's further Plenitude of Universality.

We have to consider now the Grace received by our Blessed Lady when " the Word was made flesh and dwelt " in all the fulness of His Godhead in her womb. If her perfection had been marvellous in the beginning of her existence; if by corresponding with the never ceasing flow of Grace into her soul our Lady made ever continual progress in the knowledge and love of God, therefore in holiness, from the first instant of her Immaculate Conception until the day of the Annunciation; what was the height and breadth and depth of the Grace conferred upon her when she spoke her *Fiat*, and became the Mother of God? Surely the Grace she then received must have been more extraordinary than that which she had hitherto received. St. Thomas tells us what it effected in the Mother's soul, and leaves us to guess at its nature and intensity by saying: " When she conceived the Son of God, her Grace was *consummated*, and she was confirmed in sanctity."[1]

[1] "*In conceptione autem Filii Dei consummata est ejus gratia, confirmans eam in bono.*" *Sum. Theol.*, III. Pars, Q. XXVII., A. 5, ad 2.

So wonderful a change was wrought in the Virgin Mother when God became man, that the Grace she received is termed "consummated," not in the sense of finality—that is, that it could neither be further increased nor merited—but in the sense of immutability. Her will, already centred in God from the beginning, became unalterably fixed upon Him henceforth and for ever. This is called the Plenitude of our Lady's Second Sanctification. What it implies may be gathered from this: Mary was *worthy* to be Mother of God. The heavens are not pure in His sight. The Angels veil their faces in His presence. But Mary of Nazareth was without spot or stain, and so marvellously perfect, that the All Holy deigned to take flesh in her womb, to live with her life, and to contract so close and indissoluble a union with her that no power, not even that of Omnipotence, can destroy it. Everything is summed up in these words: Mary was found worthy by God Himself to be His Mother.

When we speak of the union which existed between the Child and His Mother we furnish another reason for our Lady's perfection, for it is a principle that the more intimately anything is united to the source of its being the greater is the influence of that source or cause upon the effect. God is the Source and Cause of Sanctity and

Perfection because He is Absolute Perfection; and the more intimately a creature is united with God, the greater will be the perfection of that creature. Jesus Christ as God is the sole Cause of Grace: as Man He is the Instrumental Cause of Grace, and all the Graces conferred upon any creature are conferred through Jesus Christ. He has merited them for us; and hence, the more intimate our union is with Jesus Christ, the greater will be the Grace we shall receive. No human being was so closely united with Jesus Christ as His Mother. It was a kind of substantial union. The human nature in which He appeared amongst men and by which He came into personal communication with them, for their healing and salvation, He received from our Blessed Lady. In after years, "*virtue went out from Him and healed all*,"[1] so that the mere touch of His garment brought health to the sick. Surely it must have been that the Mother, who was more closely united to Him than any other creature could ever be, received Grace from Him during that mysterious hidden life in her bosom, which uplifted her nearer to Him than all other creatures? Surely her soul, already "full of Grace" to prepare her, must have received a yet further increase of Grace which made her, now that she was really Mother

[1] Luke vi. 19.

of God, the Mirror of Justice in which the All-Perfect beheld Himself clearly reflected, as far as any creature can reflect the Creator? And we must remember, too, that while Mary in tabernacling the Word made flesh in her bosom was physically united to Him, she also conceived Him spiritually by Charity. Personal contact with Jesus Christ meant superabundance of Grace for our Blessed Lady, but the still more intense union of love demanded it, and in the Mother's soul there was no obstacle to hinder or lessen its unceasing flow. That union between the Mother and the Child was incomparably more wonderful and efficacious in its effects than the chiefest of the sevenfold means of Grace which Jesus Christ has instituted for us. The Blessed Eucharist brings us into intimate communion with our Divine Lord. He gives Himself entirely to us; the Christ, the Son of the Living God; the Christ, the Son of Mary; but He comes under the appearances of bread and wine; we live by Him, but He does not live by us, for He receives nothing from us. In the Incarnation Jesus gave Himself entirely to His Mother in the fulness of His humanity: she lived by Him because of the Grace He conferred upon her; but He also lived by His Mother, for He received His human nature from her; it was of her substance. And so there was an exchange between

Jesus and Mary: divine life radiated from the Child and filled the Mother's soul with Grace and supernatural gifts, while she communicated her life to Him, sustained and strengthened Him.

It is a principle of the spiritual life that Grace corresponds to and is commensurate with Charity. We have already seen that God loved our Blessed Lady more than all creatures, and that He manifested His love in choosing her to be His Mother, in preserving her because of this choice from all taint of sin, and by conferring upon her those extraordinary gifts of which we have spoken. How would He manifest His love, now that she became His Mother in reality? And what would Mary's love of Him be when He had become incarnate in her bosom? Her love would be the measure of the plenitude of Grace she then received, and it was the purest, noblest, and most sacred love ever given to God by any human being, for it was the love of a Virgin, a Mother, and a Mother whose Child was God Incarnate, natural and spontaneous, yet spiritualised beyond conception, uplifted to the highest regions of the supernatural and divine.

Our Blessed Lady was ever the Virgin of virgins. She could say in the most absolute manner: "Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever."[1]

[1] Ps. lxxii. 26.

Consequently she fulfilled the precept of Charity as no other has ever done, by loving God with her whole heart, with all her mind, and with all her strength. There was no division of love: it was all given to God, and given with a singleness, simplicity, and strength of the Virgin's heart which recognised God's supreme claim and had responded to it from the beginning.

Yet, as the Church teaches, while our Blessed Lady is the Virgin and Queen of Virgins, she is also the Mother of Christ; and so we may look for those qualities of maternal love in the heart of the Virgin-Mother, the qualities of heroism, tenderness, and self-sacrifice, which make mother-love what it is. And in Mary this love, even in the natural order, if we may use the term in reference to what was so supernatural, was unique. Her Child was hers in a sense to which no other child belongs to his mother, for He owed His human nature to her alone. She alone ministered to Him His humanity, and the words attributed to St. Augustine: "*Caro Christi, caro Mariæ*, Christ's flesh is Mary's flesh,"[1] are representative of Mary's exclusive right among mortals as the only human

[1] *Sermo de Assumpt. B.V.M.*, ch. ii. "The expression is found (for the first time?) in the Treatise on the Assumption, composed probably about the time of Charlemagne, which has often been attributed to St. Augustine." (De la Broise, *op. cit.*, p. 250, note.)

being necessary to the Incarnation, to say: "Thou art my beloved Son." And this love of the Virgin-Mother, with all its natural purity, strength, heroism, tenderness, and sublimity, with the additional perfection given to it by Grace, was also the love of a Virgin-Mother whose Son was the Incarnate God! St. Thomas tells us that Mary, "in becoming Mother of God, assumes a kind of infinite dignity from God who is Infinite Good; and hence, on this account, nothing more perfect than she could be made, for there is nothing more perfect than God."[1]

The same may be said of our Blessed Lady's love of her Son: it takes on a characteristic, a feature, that is like to the love of the Eternal Father. The object of the love of the Eternal and of the Immaculate was the same, the Word of God. The Word who is "the splendour of the Father and the brightness of His substance," Who is equal with the Father in all things, and eternally begotten of the Father, is the Object of His eternal love. The same "Word made flesh" is the Object of His Mother's love. The Eternal and the Temporal Generation had reference to the same Word; and hence our Blessed Lady assumes a species of affinity with the Father.[2]

[1] *Sum. Theol.*, I. Pars, Q. XXV., A. 6, ad 4.

[2] *Cf* Lepicier, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

The Word is begotten of the substance of the Father only. The "Word made flesh" received His human nature from His Mother only. The Word is "the only-begotten of the Father." Jesus is the only Son of Mary ever Virgin. And so we cannot conceive of a more perfect human being than the Immaculate. In the language of St. Bonaventure: "Though God could create a more perfect world, He could not create a more perfect mother than the Mother of God."[1]

When our Blessed Lady was so perfect and her love of God so transcendent, we may expect that the favours and graces bestowed by God would be in keeping with that perfection and love. We do not seek to understand or comprehend them. They are incomprehensible. Yet we feel that no favours could be too great for her who was Mother of God. We know that the continual intercourse of the Mother and her Son meant continual progress in sanctity for her who "bore, suckled, and handled the Eternal,"[2] and that, in the words of St. Augustine: "When she suckled Him she herself was fed with heavenly food; when she wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, she was clothed by Him in the robes of immortality; and when she laid Him to rest, He prepared for

[1] *Speculum*, ch. viii.

[2] Cardinal Newman, *Difficulties of Anglicans*, vol. ii., p. 83.

her a banquet of delights."[1] Remembering these things, we bow before her in all humility, as the holiest and most perfect work of God after the Sacred Humanity of her Son, whom God Himself deemed worthy to be His Mother, because He had made her so. And as St. Thomas of Villanova asks: "What beauty, what virtue, what perfection, what grace, what glory, is not befitting the Mother of God?"

[1] "*Creatori succum porrigis lactis, et cibis cœlestibus satiaris; pannis involvis Puerum, qui tibi immortale condonavit indumentum; in præsepio ponis infantilia membra, qui cœlestem tibi præparavit mensam*" (Serm. 14, *de Tempore*).

Chapter VI

THE FINAL PLENITUDE OF GRACE CONFERRED ON OUR BLESSED LADY

WE have seen in the preceding chapter that in describing the effects of the Grace conferred upon our Blessed Lady when she became the Mother of God, St. Thomas speaks of her being "confirmed in good," and teaches that her perfection was consummated. But we have also seen that these expressions refer to immutability, not to finality in the sanctity of the Immaculate. The Angelic Doctor does not imply that the Mother of God either could not or did not make further progress in perfection, or that the Grace she then received was inactive. Grace always implies supernatural activity; consequently, while our Blessed Lady was established in perfection when she became the Mother of God, she could nevertheless continue to use the Grace that had been given to her, continue to increase in the knowledge and love of God, continue to merit still further Graces as

long as life was hers in which to merit, since death alone destroys all possibility of meriting further Grace. So long as the creature is a wayfarer on earth it is possible to add to the store of merit. There was only One Who fully realised the infinite possibilities of Grace from the beginning. Jesus Christ alone possessed the plenitude of Grace absolutely from the instant when " the Word was made flesh." He alone, in the language of St. Thomas, was the *Comprehensor*, not merely a wayfarer, since His human soul was united in the closest possible union with God from the first moment of His human life. Hence, He was so fully endowed with Grace that further increase was impossible. It was not thus with His Mother. She was a creature and a wayfarer; further increase in perfection and Grace was only at an end for her when her earthly existence was closed and Grace had given place to Glory. She was " full of Grace " at the moment of her Immaculate Conception, but it was not the fulness of Grace that was hers when she became Mother of God, just as her plenitude of Grace then was not so full as when she closed her eyes on earth to open them to the splendours of the unveiled vision of God in heaven. During the years that passed from the Annunciation to her Dormition, our Blessed Lady " went forwards and increased " in Grace

and perfection "to perfect day," when she received her Queenly crown as the noblest effect of God's sanctifying Grace.

"The Blessed Virgin was endowed with a threefold perfection of Grace," says St. Thomas: "the first was by way of preparation that she might be worthy to be the Mother of God. . . . The second . . . was the outcome of the presence of the Son of God incarnate in her womb. The third is her final perfection, that of Glory. That the second perfection is greater than the first, and the third greater than the second, is evident."[1]

There was no reason why God's Mother should not have gone "forwards and increased" in Grace and holiness. Being a creature she could not exhaust the infinite possibilities of Grace, for Grace is a participation in the divine nature, and it matters not how holy or how perfect the creature is, it will ever fall infinitely short of the Infinite Sanctity and Perfection of God. Neither can we say that, in becoming Mother of God, Mary was so filled with Grace as to be incapable of receiving any further increase. The effect of the Grace our Blessed Lady received was to deepen and intensify her love of God. Her Grace and Charity went hand in hand. Progress in the one

[1] *Sum. Theol.*, III. Pars, Q. XXVII., A. 5, ad. 2.

implied progress in the other, and, as St. Bernard says: Love is limitless.[1]

In loving we acquire yet further power to love; "abyss calleth to abyss." The love of God ever demanded the love of His mother, and she responded to the demand. To love Him more, and love Him more intimately and intensely, demanded still further Grace. Even God's Mother could not love Him so absolutely as to set a limit to her love. God alone can love Himself adequately. Infinite love alone can love infinitely; and the Mother was a creature. Hence, she could ever increase in the love of God: consequently, though "full of Grace" from the beginning; "full of Grace" in the conception of her Divine Son so that she was confirmed and established in perfection, our Blessed Lady, so long as she remained on earth, was capable of receiving still further Grace, still further perfection, until "her Grace was finally consummated when she entered into Glory, and she was made perfect in the enjoyment of all good" for ever.[2]

There were three factors which made for the increase of Grace and perfection in the Mother of God: her merits, the Sacraments, and her share

[1] *Modus sine modo diligere. De diligendo Deo*, c. 1.

[2] *Sum. Theol.*, III. Pars, Q. XXVII., A. 5, ad 2: *cf.* Hugon, *op. cit.*, pp. 108–111; Terrien, *op. cit.*, pp. 191–198.

in the Mysteries of her Divine Son. Merit, considered in the abstract, is a certain right to receive recompense; in the concrete, it is an act worthy of being rewarded. Theologians distinguish between Merit *de Condigno*, that which is due in justice and rigorously, on account of the intrinsic worth of the act; and Merit *de Congruo*, that which is fittingly due. Certain conditions are required for merit: The acts must be free, morally good, performed by one who is in the state of Grace, who is, moreover, a wayfarer, and they must be done for God. These conditions, it is needless to say, were fulfilled by the Immaculate. No human being was so utterly free as our Blessed Lady. Her Immaculate Conception had rendered her free in the most perfect manner, by exempting her from sin, from ignorance, error, and concupiscence, those forces which are so destructive of human liberty. Every act of hers was supremely good because the outcome of a will which, centred in God from the beginning, had been confirmed in good when she became Mother of God. And her actions were those of one who had been created "full of Grace," which indeed "had not been void" in her, but which impelled her to love God with supreme love. This Charity influenced each virtue and directed its activities towards God; and this, be it remembered, from

the instant when she reached out to Him by the first movement of her intelligence and will, until the last moment of her earthly life.

We have said that "*every* act was supremely good." This means that each act performed by the Immaculate was a *human* act—that is, fully free and deliberate, consequently that her merit was continual and uninterrupted. Nothing was lost. Our Blessed Lady was always completely mistress of herself. It was one of her privileges. We refer our readers to what has been said with regard to the *infused* knowledge of our Lady. It was quite independent of any physical organism, and was, in consequence, free from interruption, distraction, and suspension of activity. In other words, it was deliberate. Every deliberate act is either good or evil; there are no indifferent deliberate acts, or, what comes to the same thing, no indifferent human acts. And if the deliberate act is performed by one who is in the friendship of God, one who is in the state of Grace, the act is meritorious and deserves a new increase of divine and supernatural perfection. Our Lady was created "full of Grace"; she had been confirmed in Grace when she became Mother of God. Every act of hers, therefore, because fully deliberate was also meritorious; and these acts continually repeated throughout the years of her life on earth

meant an ever-increasing store of merit, an ever-constant progress in perfection. Our actions are not always subject to the control of our intelligence and will, owing to the revolt of the passions, our blindness of mind, and our feeble will, which is swayed to and fro by the mere semblance of good. But there was no room for the play of these forces in the life of the Mother of God. Everything in her was in perfect harmony. Her inferior powers were subject to reason; her body was subject to her soul; and God was her soul's Master. The intellect specifies to the will the object to which the will tends; and an intellect such as that with which God's Mother was endowed was ever actively directed towards Him, its supreme object. Hence her will was ever active. Hence, again, her acts were continual, and because they were supernaturally good, were ever meritorious.

As we have already stated,[1] this activity of our Lady did not hinder the performance of her ordinary duties, or lessen in any way the exercise of her other faculties. Her infused knowledge energised in the highest spiritual regions of her soul, and was absolutely independent of sense-perceptions or imagination. Her other faculties, therefore, preserved their autonomy in full; and

[1] *Cf.* ch. iv.

her life, while it was wholly supernatural, lost nothing of its human, natural activity. Hence, too, this exercise of infused knowledge rendered her repose an act of love. She could say as the Spouse in the Canticle of Canticles: "I sleep, and my heart watcheth."[1]

"This heavenly Queen," says St. Francis de Sales, "slept only through love, for she only gave rest to her body to restore its vigour, so that she might serve God more perfectly afterwards, an act of Charity which was most excellent."[2] "Even during her sleep the Blessed Virgin enjoyed a more perfect contemplation than an ordinary mortal enjoys when awake."[3] Suarez[4] and Contenson[5] teach that our Blessed Lady enjoyed the use of reason during sleep, consequently that the continuity of her merit was absolute. Father Terrien holds the same opinion.[6] "Once the real nature of infused knowledge is grasped," says Father Hugon, "there is little difficulty in accepting the teaching. It is altogether independent of sensory conditions, receives no assistance from the inferior faculties, and does not require the

[1] V. 2.

[2] *Traité de l'Amour de Dieu*, l. iii., ch. 8.

[3] St. Bernardine of Siena, *Opera*, vol. iii., Ser. iv.

[4] *De Myst. Vitæ Christi*, d. 18, sect. 2.

[5] *Theol. Mentis et Cordis*, lib. x., diss. vi., ch. i., spec. 11, *quinto*.

[6] *Op. cit.*, vol. ii., l. vii., ch. 1.

services of the imagination. It is not fettered when the senses are in repose, does not sleep when they are at rest, but is active even when they are inactive. It resembles the intuitive knowledge of the Angels, and is all light: a day that never wanes, it knows neither night, fatigue, nor sleep. If Mary enjoyed this privilege at her Conception, it remained possible during her sleep, for the spirit was not less free, nor the will less perfect then than it was in the first instant of her existence."[1] Hence it is that, from the first moment of her life on earth until the last, our Blessed Lady's activity was uninterrupted and her merit, in consequence, continual.

This, however, was but one source of merit, the continuity of act. The perfection of her personality and of her acts enters also into the conception of merit. Acts are attributed to the person, and the supernatural dignity of the person is a reason for the perfection of the merit due to the acts. The more supernaturally perfect the person is, the greater the dignity, the greater will be the merit-value of the acts. Thus our Divine Lord's merits are of infinite value because He is infinitely perfect, and each act of His was of infinite worth on account of His infinite dignity. After Jesus, Mary is the most perfect work of God

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 120.

and highest in dignity. Because she is Mother of God she has acquired a kind of infinite dignity,[1] and her actions, therefore, possess a value not possessed by those of any other creature. The dignity of the Immaculate was the effect of Grace, and, as St. Thomas teaches, "the more fully an act is quickened by Grace the more meritorious it is,"[2] it follows that each action performed by her who was "full of Grace," full with the fulness of superabundance, was meritorious in the highest degree, and that increase of merit was commensurate with increase of Grace.

Furthermore the merit-value of human acts is proportionate to the influence of Charity. The more fully God takes possession of our being and activity, the more pleasing to Him, and the worthier of His acceptance will be our life and work. It is Charity that makes God master of our life, and this Charity quickens every act, however trivial it may appear, in those souls who love Him: "To them that love God *all things* work together unto good."[3]

Our Blessed Lady loved God in a supreme degree, as fully and as perfectly as could be given

[1] *Sum. Theol.*, I. Pars, Q. XXVI., A. 6, ad 4.

[2] "*Quanto majori gratia actus informatur, tanto magis est meritorius*" in D. ii., d. 29, Q. I., A. 4.

[3] Rom. viii. 28.

to any creature to love Him. Her first act of Charity was heroic. Every subsequent act of Charity was also heroic, and love of God possessed her completely "from the beginning of her ways." It influenced her entire existence; influenced each particular virtue and the activities of each virtue; and made the being, existence, and activity of the Immaculate its own. What merit must hers have been, when every act from first to last was an act of the love of God? "And the fire on the altar shall always burn, and the priest shall feed it. . . . This is the perpetual fire which shall never go out on the altar."[1] The fire of divine love was lighted on the altar of Mary's soul. She fed it day and night by every act she performed, for each act was free and deliberate, and a deliberate act of Charity. Those acts became more intense as her love increased, and her love of God increased when He took flesh in her womb, when she freely offered Him to His Father on Calvary, when the Holy Ghost descended upon her and the assembled Apostles on Pentecost; and each time that she received the Bread of Life. The fire was perpetual: it never waned and was never extinguished. And at the hour of her death, that fire of Charity was only transferred from earth to heaven,

[1] Lev. vi. 12–13.

where it burns as an unquenchable flame for eternity.

Another source of merit was the excellence of our Lady's actions. There is a scale of perfection in work as in virtue; and when acts are influenced by and spring from Charity, they increase in perfection according to the perfection of their object.

The Fathers and Doctors of the Church are unanimous in teaching that, after her Divine Son, Mary is the most perfect model of all virtue. Like Him, she too has passed through every phase of human life and has experienced its trials. She is wholly human, yet through God's Grace she has become to all a perfect exemplar of every virtue, and this excellence is due to the fact that Charity was the root of her activities. This excellence was consistent and perpetual; and, as the object of her actions was ever the highest, and each action was influenced by most perfect Charity, her merit was matchless.

St. Paul extols the faith of Abraham, "who against hope believed in hope."[1] What was Abraham's faith in comparison with that of our Blessed Lady who believed without question or hesitation in the word of the Angel of the Annunciation, that "the Holy Ghost should

[2] Rom. iv. 18–19.

come upon her, and the power of the Most High overshadow her," and a Son Who was God should be born of her, and that she should remain a Virgin while becoming a mother? Well might St. Elizabeth exclaim: "Blessed art thou that hast believed!"[1] Her faith was marvellous: equally marvellous was her purity. "What greater gift" could God give her," says Bossuet, "than His Son to be her Son? Yet, rather than lose her virginal purity, she was ready to refuse the gift" until she learned how this should be done.[2] And her humility was as marvellous as her faith and purity. She, the Mother of God, proclaimed herself to be His handmaid! Her son was the Son of the Most High; the Lord God would give unto Him the throne of David His Father; He should reign in the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there should be no end.[3] The glory of her Son should envelop her, His Mother, and the tongues that praised Him should sing her praises too. Through her, the Desired of Nations had come, the Prince of Peace, God the Mighty; while because of her part in the Incarnation, people in after years, even until the end of time, would bless "the womb that bore

[1] Luke i. 45.

[2] *Cf.* Bossuet, *Élévations sur les Mystères.* Sen. 12e, 3e, Elevation.

[3] Luke i. 32.

Him, and the breasts that gave Him suck." Never, even in thought, could she be separated from her Son; and yet, uplifted though she was to such heights of glory, the Mother finds no other words than these in which to express the thoughts of her heart: "My soul doth magnify the Lord. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid."[1] Her confidence in God was absolute and unshaken, though trial came upon trial to wound her. "Joseph . . . being a just man . . . was minded to put her away privately."[2] A word from her would have dispelled his doubts, but Mary spoke no word. She was in God's hands. She was His handmaid. He would make known His designs in His own time and in His own way. Her absolute confidence was shown again when, obeying her spouse to whom the command had been given, she fared forth into the unknown calmly and fearlessly, to await in the land of exile a further manifestation of the Divine Will. Her thoughtfulness and charity are seen at the marriage feast in Cana, as her tender solicitude had been already proven when she made the long journey to visit her kinswoman St. Elizabeth. And while she won for herself the title of "Virgin most Prudent," in weighing the words of the

[1] Luke i. 46–48. [2] Matt. i. 19.

Angel's message to her at Nazareth, she was crowned the Queen of Martyrs when "she stood by the Cross of Jesus" on Calvary, and showed a fortitude, a spirit of self-sacrifice, and a generosity wholly supernatural, sublime, and heroic.

We have said that Charity was the source of all our Blessed Lady's acts, and we know that "the Charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us."[1] Every just soul is the tabernacle of the Spirit of Love, and His presence is more perfect in so far forth as Sanctifying Grace is more abundant. He is the Principle of all supernatural activity, and He influences each and every act, so that the soul becomes a divine instrument in which the natural and infused virtues combine to produce a perfect harmony of praise to God. This is true of all the just, but when applied to our Blessed Lady it has an incomparably higher signification, for she is the Temple of God in an absolutely unique sense. The Gifts of the Holy Ghost had full sway in her Immaculate soul from the moment of her creation. The Holy Trinity had taken full possession of her whole being, with the result that all her actions and the natural course of all her activity became supernaturally perfect. God was all in all to her. She belonged fully and

[1] Rom. v. 6.

entirely to Him: *My beloved to me, and I to Him.*[1] Hence, our Blessed Lady's life and activity were completely and at all times under the benign influence of God, and her actions merited an increase of Grace and a corresponding increase of Glory.[2]

Lastly the Sacraments, and those divine mysteries in which the Mother of God had a part, were another source of Grace for her, consequently of merit.

The Sacraments are the means by which God gives to His children that supernatural energy which enables them to live the supernatural life. They confer Grace of themselves. One of these means, however, our Blessed Lady could not receive because she was a woman—Holy Orders. It was unnecessary that she should receive the Sacrament of Baptism, since she had been exempt from the stain of Original Sin; or Penance, since she had never committed any actual sin; or Extreme Unction, since she did not require to be strengthened against either the effects of sin or the temptations of the Evil One. When she was espoused to St. Joseph Matrimony had not been raised to the dignity of a Sacrament; while the outpouring of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost

[1] Cant. of Canticles, ii. 16.

[2] *Cf.* Hugon, *op. cit.*, pp. 138–139; Terrien, *op. cit.*, pp. 232–234.

produced the effects of the Sacrament of Confirmation. Yet theologians have held that our Blessed Lady did actually receive the Sacrament of Baptism, not indeed, that it was necessary that she should receive it, but because it was fitting that she should be sealed with the character conferred upon all those who by Baptism are incorporated in the Mystic Body of Jesus Christ, the Church; and furthermore, become like unto Christ by receiving the sign of His Passion of which this Sacrament is the token.[1] Others have taught that our Lady received the Sacrament of Extreme Unction "because of its fruits, for the strengthening of the faith, and as an example of humility."[2] But did not the Divine Motherhood constitute our Blessed Lady the chief member of the Mystical Body of her Son? Did not her sacrifice of Him make her more conformable to Him, and give her a greater right to share in the graces of His Passion than any other creature? As to Extreme Unction, there were no effects of sin, no *reliquiæ* in the Immaculate; she was "all fair" and always so. Furthermore,

[1] *Cf.* St. Thomas in IV., dist. 6, Q. I. A. 1., sol. 3.

[2] Suarez, *De Myst. Vitæ Christi*, d. 18, s. 3; *cf.* B. Albert the Great. *Marial*, ch. lxxii., lxxiv.; St. Antoninus, *Summa*, III. Pars, tit. xiv., ch. viii.; St. Bernardine of Siena, *Marial*, IV. Pars, Serm. ix.

this Sacrament is for the *sick*, for those who are dying from sickness; but our Blessed Lady knew neither sickness, infirmity, nor age. But while we say there was no need that the Mother of God should receive these Sacraments, and that she could not receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders, we do not say that she was deprived of the Graces conferred by them. The Sacraments are the means of Grace, and it was her Son Who freely instituted them. He could have appointed other means, or have dispensed with those He had instituted. Surely we cannot deny that He could also have poured incomparably greater Graces into His Mother's soul without the Sacraments than through them. Can we say that He refrained from doing so?

There was one Sacrament, however, and the chief, which our Blessed Lady did receive—the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist; and it is the opinion of theologians that she received it daily. Their teaching is based upon the words of the Acts of the Apostles, which speak of the charity of the early Christians who were "persevering in the doctrine of the Apostles, and in the communication of the breaking of bread, and in prayer."[1] No tongue can fittingly speak of those Communions in which the Mysteries of Nazareth

[1] ii. 42.

and Bethlehem were daily renewed, and the Mother was united to her Son in the Sacrament of Love. But when we remember that the effects of this Sacrament are proportionate to the dispositions with which It is received; when we remember, furthermore, the perfection of our Blessed Lady, her incomparable faith and love, her wonderful humility, her immaculate purity, and her longing for Him "Whom her soul loved," we may learn something of the Graces that inundated her soul in each Communion, and obtain some idea, faint and imperfect it is true, of her stupendous merits.

Theologians have discussed the question: Whether the Divine Motherhood was itself a means of sanctification? Without inquiring into the arguments, we may surely assert with Contenson that, "the Divine Maternity made for the sanctification of Mary, if not formally and directly, certainly radically and indirectly. The exigency was such that God could not overlook it.[1]

But the Mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption, in which our Blessed Lady was so intimately associated with the designs of God, made for an increase of Grace in her soul. We have already shown that the physical presence of

[1] *Theol. Mentis et Cordis*, vol. iii., Dissert. vi., ch. ii., Spec 2.

the Word made flesh implied and necessitated an ever-increasing flow of Grace. When "virtue went out from Him and healed all" who came in contact with our Lord, we may say with truth that the same "virtue went out from Him" to His Mother, when she did for Him all that any mother does for her child, and that this contact with the Sacred Humanity rendered our Blessed Lady purer, holier, more pleasing to God.[1] The same may be said of the Sacrifice of Calvary. Our Blessed Lady was the first to benefit by the Passion of her Divine Son; and as she shared in His Sacrifice and suffered with Him, she assuredly merited still further Grace, and to be crowned with greater glory in consequence. Martyrdom is a source of grace for those who give this supreme proof of charity. The Mother of God was not a mere onlooker at the Sacrifice, neither was she only a recipient of its fruits. She joined with her Son in the Sacrifice; consented to it as she had consented to the Incarnation, and on Calvary, as at Nazareth, made her act of absolute conformity to the Will of God: Be it done to me

[1] "*Gratiam multipliciter ex opere operato fuisse auctam: in Conceptione Verbi, in susceptione Eucharistiæ, in præsentia Salvatoris in sinu gestati, inter brachia, sugentis mammas, in cruce morientis, in adventu Spiritus Sancti. . . .*" (Contenson, *op. cit.*, lib. x., Dissert. vi., ch. i., Spec. 2.)

according to His word. Her love was supreme; supreme too was her sorrow; but the anguish she suffered was a proof of her Charity, a martyrdom which merited for her yet greater Grace.[1] And as she was filled with the plenitude of Grace when she became Mother of God, so also must she have been filled with Grace again, when, at the foot of the Cross, she was confirmed in her Motherhood of men. "This spiritual childbirth," says Father Hugon, "is the complement of her Divine Maternity. . . . She is Mother of the natural and the Mystical Body. The Maternity in both cases was wholly supernatural; the Holy Ghost must needs come upon her now as in the first moment of the Incarnation, and the power of the Most High confer upon her this other Virginal Motherhood. Her first Maternity was wrought by the Spirit and power of God; the second Maternity was accomplished by the Spirit of God and Grace."[2]

And so the Mother of God was prepared for the position she was to occupy for ever, by the Grace which increased each instant of her life, by the merit which was a consequence of this Grace, by the Sacraments which were its channels, and by her share in the Mysteries of her Son.

[1] *Cf.* Lepicier, *op. cit.*, pp. 389–395.
[2] *La Mère de Grâce*, p. 147.

She was made perfect, so perfect that we cannot conceive of a creature more perfect than the Mother of God. Then it was that the voice of the Beloved called: "Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come."[1]

[1] Cant. of Canticles, ii. 10.

Chapter VII

THE PLENITUDE OF UNIVERSALITY

IN laying down the broad, far-reaching principle that: "The Blessed Virgin must be endowed with every perfection,"[1] St. Thomas sums up in one luminous sentence the teaching of the Fathers and theologians. And if we but steadily keep before our minds the position and dignity of the Mother of God, we shall see that the principle is an eminently rational one. As we have already said, our Blessed Lady occupies a position in the scheme of Creation and Redemption which is unique. Jesus Christ is very God and truly Man: Mary is His Mother. The Word was made flesh, and it was in the Virgin's womb that the Mystery was wrought. Mindful of these facts, we see the force and appositeness of the principle; and we acknowledge that every perfection, natural and supernatural, perfections of body as well as perfections of soul, must have been bestowed upon her whom God had chosen to be the Mother of His Son.

[1] "*In Beata Virgine debuit apparere omne illud quod perfectionis fuit*" (iv. Dist. 30, Q. II., A. 1, sol. 1).

For the better understanding of the principle and of what may be legitimately inferred from it, we remind our readers of the two rules laid down regarding the extent of our Lady's privileges. We stated that: First, every privilege which had been bestowed upon any of God's servants was also conferred, and in a more excellent manner, upon the Mother of God. Secondly, our Blessed Lady received all those privileges and perfections it was fitting she should receive that she might be made worthy for her high office. We stated, furthermore, that the privileges bestowed upon our Lady were conditioned by her position as a creature, a woman, and a wayfarer.

Now we must not be taken as implying that each specific privilege enjoyed by any particular Saint was also enjoyed by our Blessed Lady. We are not to conclude, for example, that she was actually endowed with the power of bilocation because St. Philip Neri had received it; or that because St. Hyacinth walked dry-shod over the waters of the Dneister our Lady did the same. We imply that she received privileges of a higher order in which wonders such as those we have mentioned were contained; and refer to privileges the absence of which would have implied a kind of inferiority, and the possession of which made for her greater excellence. Thus some

theologians have taught that our Lady enjoyed the Beatific Vision during her earthly life, not indeed permanently, but in a transient way, and they base their arguments upon the fact that St. Augustine claims this privilege for Moses;[1] and St. Thomas, speaking of St. Paul's rapture,[2] says: "It is more fitting to assume that he beheld God in His essence."[3] If Moses and St. Paul enjoyed this privilege, the Mother of God must assuredly have enjoyed it also. In the same way, and following the same process of reasoning, they have taught the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin into heaven. It was fitting in every sense that the future Mother of God should be preserved absolutely from all taint of Original Sin. Therefore was she created Immaculate. It was not fitting that God's Mother 'should see corruption." Therefore was she assumed into heaven.

St. Alphonsus makes this reasoning his own "When an opinion tends in any way to the honour of the Most Blessed Virgin, when it has some foundation, and is repugnant neither to the faith nor to the degrees of the Church, nor to truth, the refusal to hold it, or to oppose it because the

[1] *Super Genesim*, lib. xii.
[2] 2 Cor. xii. 1 *sqq.*
[3] *Sum. Theol.*, II.-IIa., Q. CLXXV., A. 3.

reverse may be true, shows little devotion to the Mother of God. Of the number of such as these I do not choose to be . . . but rather of the number of those who fully and firmly believe all that can, without error, be believed of the greatness of Mary. . . . If there was nothing else to take away our fear of exceeding in the praises of Mary, St. Augustine should suffice; for he declares that whatever we may say in praise of Mary is little in comparison with that which she deserves on account of her dignity of Mother of God."[1] With these forceful words of so great a client of our Lady to encourage us, let us discuss as briefly and as reverently as possible the perfections and privileges of our Blessed Lady from the point of view of universality.

We have said that every perfection, natural and supernatural, those of body as well as those of soul, must have been granted to her, yet each and all of them conditioned in the way we have mentioned.

What were the bodily perfections of the Immaculate? Jesus Christ was "beautiful above the sons of men," for he was God Who is "clothed with beauty," the source of all beauty. Mary is His Mother; *the* woman foretold in the Divine Promise; the Ideal Woman, as her Son is the Ideal

[1] *Glories of Mary*, P. i., ch. v, p. 125.

Man. If the Eternal " had Christ in view when He moulded the dust of the earth into a human body,"[1] surely He had His Son in view when He formed the body of the Mother who was to minister to Him His human nature.[2] Why should the living Temple of God be fashioned in any imperfect manner, or be bereft of external beauty, when " beauty is, as it were, a voice of praise to, and an acknowledgment of, God ";[3] and God Himself had ordered with extremest care the beautifying and adornment of that other Temple in which His presence was revealed ?[4] Mary is the " unspotted mirror of God's majesty," the clear reflection of His eternal beauty, and it is only fitting that she who was predestined to be the Mother of His Son should be a marvel of every perfection. Hence, according to the Fathers, she united in her own person all the exterior beauty of those who are her types and figures in the Old Testament. She possessed the charm of Rachel, the grace of Rebecca, the radiant beauty of Judith, and the sweet majesty of Esther. To the maidenly beauty of the Virgin she united

[1] " *Quodcumque limus exprimebatur, Christus cogitabatur homo futurus,*" Tertullian, *De Resurrectione Carnis,* ch. vi.

[2] *Cf.* Bossuet, 1 *Sermon sur la Nativité de la Sainte Vierge.*

[3] " *Omnium pulchritudo quodam modo vox est confitentium Deo,*" St. Augustine, *Ennar.* in Psalm 148.

[4] *Cf.* Exodus xxv., xxvi., xxvii., xxxv.

the stately beauty of the Mother. Yet what colours are bright enough, what human hand is skilful enough to paint even the faintest way in the beauty of the Immaculate? The brush of an Angelico, guided by Angel hands, has given us a picture of our Queen, and it is as if a smile from heaven had been frescoed on the lifeless walls to cheer and brighten human lives. What is it to the reality? The inspired writer in the Canticle of Canticles has drawn her image, and there the Holy Ghost describes her as "the most beautiful among women," "the fairest among women," "the lily among thorns." Her "eyes are as those of a dove"; her "lips are as scarlet laces," and "as a dropping honeycomb"; her "speech is sweet, honey and milk are under her tongue"; her "neck is as a tower of ivory"; her "cheeks are as a piece of pomegranate"; her "head is like Carmel"; her "stature is like to a palm-tree"; and "she cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun." She is "the one, the perfect one, the only one." She is "all fair, and there is not a spot in her." The Holy Spirit describes His Spouse as one "chosen out of thousands," incomparably perfect, with a perfection that is more than human, and a beauty which is "not like earthly beauty, dangerous to look upon." This phrase of Cardinal Newman's

expresses the opinions of theologians on the question;[1] and we may well believe that, when the mere sight of certain of God's Saints inspired virtue, the vision of the immaculate beauty of God's Virgin Mother, the presence of the Queen of Saints, must have uplifted human hearts to heaven and have turned man's thoughts to God.

Now we know that while our Divine Lord could and actually did experience fatigue, hunger, and thirst, He was utterly perfect, nevertheless, in His Sacred Humanity. There was no organic disturbance, no disease, nothing that could cause sickness or ill-health. In this, as in so many things, His Immaculate Mother resembled Him. There was no discordance in her: everything was harmoniously perfect. Neither age nor sickness could affect her, and nothing could disturb the deep serenity of her soul, or paralyse its influence over the body which it quickened. As we have said before: Mary was always completely mistress of herself, fully self-contained. Her virginal body received energy to the fullest extent from its natural principle of life and activity, and, in a sense, shared in her soul's eternal youth and

[1] *Cf.* St. Thomas, in III., d. 3., Q. I., A. 2, sol. 1, ad 3. Other authorities are given by Father Terrien, S.J., *op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 130.

incorruption.[1] Nor must we forget or overlook the fact that she was the Mother of Him from Whom that "virtue went out" for the healing of the sick, the diseased, all who came into contact with Him. They were ordinary, sinful creatures; His mother was the Immaculate. If the virtue of Jesus Christ brought healing to them, may we not justly say that it brought immunity to her in whose womb the Omnipotent became incarnate, from whom He received His humanity? A single word in the Gospels brings home to us the fact that our Blessed Lady was fully mistress of herself: it is the word *Stabat*. She was human; a mother; and her only Son hung dying on the Cross amidst surroundings and in circumstances which rendered His death peculiarly painful and humiliating. The Mother shared His pain and suffering; she shared His humiliation, too, and her sufferings and humiliation were all the greater because she alone amongst creatures understood, as far as a creature could possibly understand, all that the tragedy of Calvary meant. No human sympathy could alleviate her suffering, for no human being could sound its depths. Yet, in the hour of supreme desolation, Mary stood at the foot of the Cross, uncomforted but unfaltering, heart-broken yet sublime. The waters of bitter-

[1] *Cf.* Hugon, *op. cit.*, p. 166; Lepicier, *op. cit.*, pp. 224–226.

ness passed over her, but they did not overwhelm her, and on Calvary as at Nazareth the Graces she received upheld her and strengthened her to show herself a worthy Mother of the Redeemer of mankind.

We have said that the exterior beauty and perfection of our Blessed Lady served to throw into bolder relief the beauty and perfection of her soul; and we have spoken of the infused knowledge which, without interruption or suspension, she possessed from the first instant of her Immaculate Conception. Let us try to enter more fully into the subject.

Just because the Graces she received were so immeasurably great must her soul have been incomparably perfect. We do not mean to say that Grace is given in proportion to natural perfection: we imply that of necessity there must be proportion between what can be perfected and that which perfects it.

What, then, was the perfection of our Lady's Intelligence and Will—those two spiritual faculties which make for the soul's excellence?

We may say without hesitation that, in whatever dealt with the things of the Spirit of God, our Blessed Lady's knowledge was perfect and of extraordinary extent and intensity. It must necessarily have been so when we remember that

it was proportionate to the Graces conferred upon her; for those Graces were not blindly used, they were used intelligently. Hence, that her supernatural activity might work fully and without hindrance, her knowledge, as we have said, must have been extraordinary. How extraordinary it was may be guessed at when we say that, "a condition of Charity, it went hand in hand with it."[1] The very position of the Mother of God demanded this. She was made worthy—*idonea* is the term used—for that office, and we cannot conceive of her being so if there had been any deficiency or imperfection in the knowledge that was fitting or due. It must at least have been as great as the knowledge possessed by the Angels, for even during her life on earth Mary was their Sovereign Queen. It must also have been as extensive as the knowledge which Adam possessed as head of the human race, a knowledge which fitted him to be the guide of the intelligence of humanity as he was its human source.

Moreover, as the personal presence of the Word made flesh brought immunity from physical weakness, must it not also have brought enlightenment to the Mother? Our Blessed Lady is called the Seat of Wisdom "because the Son of God, Who is also called in Scripture the Word and Wisdom

[1] Hugon, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

of God, once dwelt in her, and then, after His birth of her, was carried in her arms and seated in her lap in His first years. . . . But the possession of her Son lasted beyond His infancy—He was under her rule, as St. Luke tells us, and lived with her in her house, till He went forth to preach—that is, for at least a whole thirty years. . . . If such close and continued intimacy with her Son created in her a sanctity inconceivably great, must not also the knowledge which she gained during those many years from His conversation of present, past, and future, have been so large, and so profound, and so diversified, and so thorough, that, though she was a poor woman without human advantages, she must, in her knowledge of creation, of the universe, and of history, have excelled the greatest of philosophers, and in her theological knowledge the greatest of theologians, and in her prophetic discernment the most favoured of the prophets."[1]

Her knowledge had its limits, for even the most perfect human knowledge is finite, as also is the prophet's vision and the intuition of the Angels. But limitation does not imply ignorance, still less does it imply error. There is no ignorance where there is the knowledge befitting and requisite

[1] *Meditations and Devotions of Cardinal Newman*, pp. 47–48. Longmans, Green and Co. London, 1903.

to the condition and office; and there can be no error in one who, by her very choice as Mother of God, was created perfect in body and soul, in external beauty, and in transcendence of intellect—perfection which made her what God had willed she should be, the worthy Mother of His Son.

It stands to reason that our Lady's knowledge increased during her life. Those periods of her existence when she received increase of Grace were also periods of greater enlightenment. When she became the very Mother of God we may be assured that she received an extraordinary increase of enlightenment; and we may also be assured that, during those thirty years of the Hidden Life, her Son dwelt with her as the Eternal with Moses: "I will speak to him mouth to mouth, and plainly, and not by riddles and figures doth he see the Lord."[1] Who could gauge the knowledge that Mary obtained from Eternal Wisdom Incarnate during those thirty years? And when she took upon her a new relationship towards us on the Hill of Calvary, or rather was confirmed in her Motherhood of men, still further illumination was necessitated. The Paraclete came upon her in that upper room at Pentecost and filled her with the plenitude

[1] Num. xii. 8.

of His Gifts of Wisdom, Knowledge, and Understanding, that she might cradle the infant Church and tend it, as once she had cradled the Infant Christ.

Hence we may rightly conclude that our Lady's knowledge was marvellous. How could it be otherwise in one who was taught of God directly, by the impression of new ideas, by the illumination of the Holy Ghost, by her constant intercourse with the Divine Teacher of men? How could it be otherwise in one who was so perfect that the thought of any imperfection in her is repugnant to our sense of what is her due? Surely her intelligence acted as none other could, except the human intelligence of her Son, in regard to those visible things of God, the works of Nature, which "show forth His glory" so clearly that all who know Him not are inexcusable.[1] And if her Son on the way to Emmaus "opened the understanding" of the two disciples "that they might understand the Scriptures,"[2] can we doubt that, during those thirty years in which He lived with her, He opened the understanding of His Mother and revealed to her the designs of God, upon which she meditated, "pondering them in her heart" throughout her life, growing in the knowledge of God, drawing nearer to Him day by day,

[1] Rom. i. 20.

[2] Luke xxiv. 45.

until at last His full glory was unveiled for ever in the eternal vision of His Face?

We have said that because our Blessed Lady was Immaculate in her Conception she was not deprived of the original justice in which our first parents had been created. Consequently, neither her intelligence nor her will was affected as the intelligence and will of every other human being have been affected.[1] Our readers will bear in mind what we said regarding the use of her rational faculties, which our Lady enjoyed from the beginning. She was able to co-operate with Divine Grace, to merit still further Grace from the first moment of her earthly existence, and her soul was endowed with every virtue, even to the degree of heroism. What further privileges of will did our Blessed Lady enjoy? Absolute exemption from all personal sin, and the privilege of impeccability.

"Those whom God elects for the accomplishment of any purpose," says St. Thomas, "He so prepares and disposes for it that they are capable of achieving it, as we read in 2 Cor. iii. 6: *Who also hath made us fit ministers of the New Testament.* The Blessed Virgin was chosen by God to be His Mother. Wherefore there cannot be any doubt that God rendered her worthy for this office by

[1] *Cf. supra*, c. iii.

His Grace, for we read in Luke i. 30: *Thou hast found grace with God.* But she would not have been a worthy Mother of God if she had ever sinned, not only because the reputation of the parents affects their children, as we see in Proverbs xvii. 6: *The glory of the children are their fathers,* and, on the contrary, the mother's dishonour would redound upon the son; but, also, because the Blessed Virgin had a singular affinity to Christ, Who received His human nature from her, and it is said in 2 Cor. vi. 15: *What concord hath Christ with Belial?* And, moreover, because the Son of God, Who is the Wisdom of God, dwelt within her in a singular manner, not only within her soul but in her womb. But we read in Wisd. i. 4: *Wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins.* Therefore we must unconditionally conclude that the Blessed Virgin never committed any actual sin, whether mortal or venial, that the words of the Canticle of Canticles might be realised: *Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee* (iv. 7).[1] "Contenson completes his Master's teaching," says Father Hugon,[2] and Contenson's words are pregnant. "The Grace that Mary received excluded not only every actual fault, but

[1] *Sum. Theol.*, III. Pars, Q. XXVII., A. 4.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 183.

also the moral power to do wrong. A special providence safeguarded her as an exterior preservative, and banished every occasion of sin; while the uninterrupted flow of preventing efficacious Grace which enlightened her intelligence to know good, and strengthened her will to do it; the concentration of her mind upon God; a docile, eager will; the custody of the senses; and that privilege which fettered or destroyed all concupiscence, was the interior cause. God's Mother, therefore, knew nothing of earthly attachments; never did the least desire affect her, never did she experience the sting of pleasure, never did any indeliberate movement urge her."[1]

That our Blessed Lady should have been rendered absolutely free from all concupiscence when she became Mother of God is perfectly intelligible; her Divine Maternity made for this as did her union with the Author of all sanctity and her relationship with her Child, a relationship which could never be broken once it was contracted. Furthermore, when we bear in mind the initial perfection of our Blessed Lady, and the extraordinary Graces she received in consequence of God's surpassing love for her whom He had chosen for His Mother, we can understand that no fault,

[1] *Theol. Mentis et Cordis*, LX., dissert. vi., ch. i., spec. 2, *decimo*.

however slight, ever dimmed the brightness of her immaculate soul even before she was confirmed in Grace in the conception of her Son. The question is not whether this concupiscence was so fettered in the Immaculate as to prevent any actual yielding to evil, but whether the inclination or tendency to evil was utterly destroyed?

The harmony which obtained when our first parents were created, and which it was God's purpose should also exist in their descendants, was destroyed when Adam fell. The inferior powers rebelled against the higher, just as these, the faculties of mind and will, had risen in revolt against God. This rebellion of the faculties and inferior powers has been transmitted to every human being. It is termed concupiscence, desire, inclination or tendency to evil. It does not follow that the inclination to evil will necessarily take shape in actual wrong-doing. It may be resisted, as it has been resisted by many servants of God; but the inclination or tendency is there. It was non-existent in our Blessed Lady.

St. Thomas explains how this could be, though living as he did when the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was still under discussion, he does not teach the doctrine of the non-existence of this inclination to evil in our Blessed Lady. Having shown how this tendency is evil because inordi-

nate, and that it is inordinate because it is contrary to reason, the Angelic Doctor proceeds: "We may say that this tendency was completely destroyed because of the abundant Grace conferred upon the Blessed Virgin, which so disposed her faculties of soul that the inferior powers never acted except under the guidance of reason, as was the case with Christ, in whom it is certain that no such tendency existed; and in Adam before he fell, because of his original justice."[1] But we have already seen that our Lady also was created in the state of original justice as Adam was; and we have also seen that she was endowed with the use of reason in the same moment that she was created Immaculate. Hence the Grace which preserved her from all stain of Original Sin also destroyed the tendency to evil which is an effect of this sin. The dignity of the Son is not affected in any way by attributing this privilege to His Mother. It was a *privilege;* a favour conferred upon her by God because of His love for her. With Jesus Christ there was no question of privilege: such immunity was His by right. Keeping this distinction before us, we may apply to our Blessed Lady the reasoning of St. Thomas regarding the total absence of any tendency to evil in our Divine Lord. "Moral

[1] *Sum. Theol.*, III. Pars, Q. XXVII., A. 3.

virtue, which has its seat in the irrational part of the soul, makes it subservient to reason, and the stronger the virtue is, the greater will be this subserviency. . . . It is the nature of this tendency to cause a sensual desire for what is contrary to reason. Wherefore, the more perfect the virtue, the less strong will be the force of this desire. Virtue the most perfect was possessed by Christ, consequently there was no tendency to evil."[1] "The more perfect the virtue, the less strong will be the force of this desire." But the initial Grace received by the Immaculate was so unique, so extraordinary, that the moral virtues infused with it were equally unique, equally extraordinary, and of the highest degree of perfection. Consequently the tendency to evil which was totally absent in our Divine Lord, *because of the virtues that were His by right* owing to the union of His human nature with the Divine Person, was also absent in His Mother *because of the extraordinary intensity of the moral virtues she received when she was preserved from all taint of Original Sin.*

Need we say that this privilege was conferred upon our Blessed Lady in view of the merits of her Divine Son? All the beauty and supernatural splendour of her being was the effect of

[1] *Sum. Theol.*, III. Pars, Q. XV., A. 2.

God's love and Grace, and as the Decree of Pope Pius IX. tells us, this Grace was bestowed upon her in view of the merits of Jesus Christ. Unless she had been preserved Mary would have been infected with the original stain like every other child of Adam; and, being infected with the stain, the tendency or inclination to evil would have been experienced by her as it is experienced by all others.

Nor does the absence of this inclination imply that our Lady was of a nerveless, anæmic type of holiness, utterly passionless. The human passions are not evil in themselves. They become so when they are centred upon or directed to an end that is contrary to reason, therefore contrary to God's law. As St. Augustine says: "The question is not whether a saintly soul is angry, but why it is angry? not whether it is sad, but why it is sad? not whether it is afraid, but what is the reason for its fear?"[1]

From what has been said we can see that our Blessed Lady was endowed with the privilege of Integrity. It was the privilege conferred upon our first parents, and it affected both soul and body: the body, by preserving it from death; the soul, by preserving it from error and malice. This privilege was lost by Original Sin. But the

[1] *De Civitate Dei*, lib. ix., ch. v.

penalty due to that loss, the penalty of physical suffering and death for the body, and of error, malice, and concupiscence for the soul, was not a debt contracted by the Immaculate just because she was Immaculate. Suffering and death were accepted by her as they were accepted by her Divine Son. She was ennobled by them, and made conformable to Him "by whose bruises we are healed."[1] Through them she merited still further increase of Graces, still greater glory; for while we pray to her as the Queen of Martyrs, we also pray to her as the woman whom "the King loved . . . more than all other women," who "had favour and kindness before Him above all women," favour so great that "He set the royal crown on her head,"[2] and proclaimed her Queen of Heaven and of earth, of Angels and of men.

Before we consider our Blessed Lady's glory in Heaven, let us examine her claim to those other

[1] Isa. liii. 5. During his period of trial Adam was possessed of potential immortality (*posse non mori*). This potential immortality would be lost if he transgressed the divine command; and, on the other hand, if he proved staunch in his time of trial, the potential immortality would become effective immortality; the *posse non mori* would become *non mori posse*. *Cf. La Révélation Primitive et les Données actuelles de la Science*, par R. P. G. Schmidt. French version by Père Lemmonyer, O.P., pp. 35 *sqq.* Paris, Gabalda, 1914. [2] Esth. ii. 17.

Graces which are termed *Gratiæ gratis datæ*, Graces which make for the well-being of others rather than for the sanctification of the individual upon whom they are conferred.

According to the Apostle, these gratuitous favours are nine: "the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith,[1] the grace of healing, the working of miracles, prophecy, the discerning of spirits, diversity of tongues, and the interpretation of speech."[2] Were these Graces also conferred upon the Immaculate? Mindful of the principle already laid down, that every favour conferred upon any servant of God was also conferred upon His Mother, and in a pre-eminent degree, though conditioned by her position as a woman, we must acknowledge that this ninefold division of gratuitous Grace was most certainly conferred upon her. Did she not possess the "word of wisdom," and the "word of knowledge" which enabled her to penetrate into the secrets of the Most High as no other could, and to teach the Evangelists those intimate lessons on the Incarnation

[1] This is not the Theological Virtue but such utter confidence in God as does not hesitate to demand a miracle, and which is certain that the miracle will be wrought if it is necessary to establish God's honour or to promote His glory. It is akin to the fourth and fifth *charisma*.

[2] 1 Cor. xii. 8–10.

which they could never have received from any human lips save hers? Was it not her "faith" which brought about the miracle at Cana of Galilee? We have no record, it is true, that our Blessed Lady wrought any miracles during her mortal life. St. Thomas gives as his reason for saying "the working of miracles did not appertain to her during her lifetime," that, "as the doctrine of Christ was to be confirmed at the time by miracles, it pertained to Christ alone, and to His disciples who were to carry His teaching abroad, to work miracles."[1] Our Blessed Lady was not an apostle in the official, formal meaning of the term. Her sex forbade the exercise of any apostolic teaching; therefore, it was not within her province to confirm the doctrine of her Son by public miracles. But shall we say that she wrought none? History records numberless miracles wrought by her since her Assumption. Lourdes has been a continual miracle for the past fifty years,[2] and now, as of old, it is His Mother who leads men to Jesus Christ.[3] In the light of

[1] *Sum. Theol.*, III. Pars, Q. XXVII., A. 5, ad 3.

[2] *Cf.* Bertrin, *Histoire Critique des Événements de Lourdes*, pp. 119–406, 445–579. Paris, 1908.

[3] *Cf.* the remarkable discourse of Father Paul Aucler, S.J., *Lourdes and the Holy Eucharist*, English translation by E. Duncan Boothman, M.A. Father Aucler was killed in action in 1914.

the records of miracles wrought by the Immaculate during the centuries that have passed, can we say that she has exercised this power only since her Assumption? May we not say rather that she simply continues to do what she did during her life on earth, with this difference, that whereas the wonders wrought by her then were as hidden as her life, now they are public, apparent, striking?[1]

The *Magnificat* is a proof that our Blessed Lady possessed the gift of prophecy, and the history of the Church is a realisation of her words to St. Elizabeth: Behold henceforth and for ever all generations shall call me blessed. Neither heresy nor unbelief can destroy, or even weaken the force of this prophecy; the testimony of nineteen centuries witnesses to its fulfilment.

The discerning of spirits, the gift which enables those who have received it to read the secrets of hearts, and to recognise whether particular inspirations come from God or from the angels of darkness, was certainly possessed by the Mother of God. Her attitude towards the Archangel is evidence of this; for while our Lady showed deepest humility, she also showed extraordinary prudence. Furthermore, the Holy Ghost enlightened and assisted His Spouse in a special

[1] *Cf.* Hugon, *op. cit.*, pp. 198–199; Terrien, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., pp. 291–295.

manner, and would never permit her to be the victim of Satan's wiles or illusions. And when we know that this Grace was conferred upon many of God's Saints for the welfare of souls; that they were able to read the secrets of hearts and thus gain power to guide the wayfarer along the narrow path to God, we cannot hesitate to attribute the same Grace to the Immaculate, but in a manner deeper and more intense.

Our Blessed Lady was the Mother of the Mystical Body as she was also the Mother of Christ. On Pentecost, the preaching of the Apostles amazed the multitude, "because that every man heard them speak in his own tongue." There were "Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers from Rome."[1] When they heard the message that Peter delivered to them, must they not have been anxious to see the Mother, and have sought her, and have prayed her: "Let thy voice sound in my ears; for thy voice is sweet"?[2] Had the Mother of Jesus no word for these her other children, the first-born of Calvary? We cannot doubt that she had a message for them, and that they heard *her* speak in their own tongues the

[1] Acts ii. 7–10. [2] Cant. of Canticles, ii. 14.

wonderful works of God.[1] This leads us to believe that she understood them; not merely that she read their hearts; but that she actually understood what they said, consequently, that our Blessed Lady was endowed with the gift of Interpretation of Speeches, which is the complement of the gift of Diversity of Tongues. She was the Mother of mankind—given that charge by her Divine Son—and we may be assured that God endowed her with the power of understanding every child of hers who had recourse to her intercession in those early days, as she now hearkens to every request and will hearken as long as time shall be.

[1] *Cf.* Cornelius à Lapide, *Comm. in Act. Apost.*, ii. 4.

Chapter VIII

THE GRACE OF GLORY AND OF QUEEN

OUR Blessed Lady passed from earth to heaven through the portals of death. But as we said in the preceding chapter, death was not a debt our Lady had to pay as is the case with other human beings. It was an event which she accepted with the same cheerful submission, the same complete abandonment to the will of God which characterised her whole life; and, as death had been accepted by her Divine Son, it was also accepted by His Mother as a means by which she was made conformable to Him even to the end. We do not imply that because our Blessed Lady was Immaculate she was therefore immortal by nature. No human being is immortal by nature, for the human body, on account of the elements of which it is composed, is by nature destined to dissolution. Hence the immortality which would have been enjoyed by our first parents if they had remained faithful was not inherent in their nature, but came from " a supernatural energy imparted by God to the

soul, by which the body should be preserved from corruption so long as the soul remained subject to God."[1] In other words, their immortality was a Grace conferred upon them by God in the state of original justice in which they had been created. When Adam fell from his estate through disobedience, he forfeited the free gift of immortality, and the forces of nature pursued their way to corruption unimpeded. Just because our Blessed Lady was human she was by nature mortal; but because she was Immaculate, because she ever retained the original justice in which she was created, she was immortal. The supernatural energy imparted by God to the souls of our first parents had also been given to the soul of the Immaculate. They lost it because they proved faithless. Mary never lost it because she never was unfaithful. In losing this energy our first parents incurred the penalty of death. No such penalty was incurred by the Mother of God.[2] Her death was the final act of love in a life of love, the last of a series which began in the first instant of her Immaculate Conception. The Mother of God died through love of God. There was no other reason for her death, since neither failing strength, nor sickness, nor age had any

[1] *Sum. Theol.*, I. Pars, Q. XCVII., A. 1.

[2] *Cf.* Lepicier, *op. cit.*, pp. 244 *sqq.*

dominion over her. Like the Spouse she "languished with love,"[1] and with the Psalmist she prayed: "As the heart panteth after the water springs, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God. . . . When shall I come and appear before God?"[2] This is the opinion of many theologians. Blessed Albert the Great distinctly teaches that the Mother of God died through love.[3] St. Francis de Sales,[4] St. Alphonsus Ligouri,[5] Suarez,[6] are of the same opinion, which Justin of Mieckow quotes with approval,[7] and Father Terrien fully endorses.[8] Bossuet teaches the same doctrine in an eloquent passage: "Mary's death was not a miracle, rather was it the cessation of a miracle. The continual miracle was that she could live apart from her Beloved. . . . Hence, we need not seek for any other cause of Mary's death than her eager love."[9] But we must never lose sight of the fact that, at the hour of her death as in each moment of her life, our Blessed Lady was com-

[1] Cant. of Canticles, ii. 5.
[2] Ps. xli. 1–2.
[3] *Super* Missus est, Q. 132.
[4] *Traité de l'Amour de Dieu*, liv. vii., c. 13, 14.
[5] *Glories of Mary*, Part ii., discourse vii.
[6] *De Myst. Vitæ Christi*, d. 21, s. 1.
[7] *Op. cit.*, vol. ii., conf. 96, p. 193.
[8] *Op. cit.*, vol. ii., pp. 326 *sqq.*
[9] *Ier Sermon pour l'Assomption.*

pletely mistress of herself, and ever retained full control over her desires however holy and vehement they were. There was nothing inordinate, therefore, in the love which caused her death, and it was supernatural. At the close of her life, as at its commencement, she was "the handmaid of the Lord." "Sorrow, agony, and martyrdom, all these she had already endured with Jesus; her last hour was a sweet slumber, a 'passing,' a rapture. . . . The Virgin passed from earth to heaven without any interruption in the exercise of her charity; but now she loves in the light without shadow, in the vision face to face, in a glory equal to her fulness of Grace, in the eternal and ever blessed possession of her God."[1]

These words might be applied to every Saint at the hour of death, in that each Saint passes swiftly into the clear vision of God by reason of the charity that quickens each. The more intense has been the Saint's love of God, the clearer will be his vision of Him; on this head we may say absolutely that no creature possesses so keen a vision of God as the Immaculate Mother. But we naturally ask: Was the Mother of God only to have the same recompense as other servants of God and nothing more? Was not a fuller reward due to her—a reward to receive which she

[1] de la Broise, *op. cit.*, p. 243.

should not be compelled to await the resurrection of the dead as others must wait for it? Once again our sense of what was fitting finds its echo in the constant tradition of the Church that the resurrection was anticipated in the case of God's Mother, and that after her death and burial she was assumed body and soul into heaven, where she now reigns "clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars."[1] We have no intention of discussing the subject from the view-point of historical tradition, but shall confine ourselves to the dogmatic arguments in favour of the Assumption of our Blessed Lady.[2]

As we have said, our sense of what was fitting urges us to believe that our Lady was bodily assumed into heaven, and that the corruption of the tomb was not permitted to dishonour the virginal body of her who knew not the corruption of sin, and who had been the living Ark of the Covenant in which God had dwelt incarnate. The doctrine, it is true, is not of faith, but as Suarez says: "Whoever would impugn an opinion so venerable and sacred would be guilty of the

[1] Apocalypse xii. 1.

[2] A succinct but careful study of the question from the historical side may be found in the *American Ecclesiastical Review*, by the Rev. F. G. Holweck, August and September, 1910.

greatest temerity,"[1] while Gotti goes further and says that "he who denies the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is to be regarded as a heretic."[2]

It has been stated above that man was not created immortal by nature; that, because he was composed of a body and soul, his body was destined to dissolution and corruption, but that he was *endowed* by God with immortality as a grace which should be his so long as he remained faithful to God. By his faithlessness he forfeited the grace he had received and incurred the penalty of death with its consequent corruption. The Mother of God was "full of Grace" from the first instant of her existence as a rational being. She had been created in the state of original justice as Adam had been, and enjoyed, therefore, all the privileges which had been conferred upon him. She never fell from that state. Grace was never void in her; on the contrary, it was ever active and ever made for her increasing perfection. Consequently, she ever retained the privilege of immunity from death and the corruption of the tomb. This immunity was realised and achieved in her bodily Assumption into heaven.

Furthermore, our Lady was "blessed among

[1] In III. Pars, Q. 37, A. 4., disp. 25, s. 2.
[2] *De Verit. Relig. Christ.*, p. 2. ch. 41, 2.

women " in a special manner, and the benediction of God in creating her Immaculate excluded all malediction, not only of sin but of death also and its consequences. " Mankind was afflicted by a threefold malediction on account of sin," says St. Thomas. " The first affected woman. . . . The second had reference to man. . . . The third fell upon both man and woman, that they should return to dust. But the Blessed Virgin was exempt from this curse also, for she was assumed bodily into heaven. We believe, indeed, that after her death she was raised up again, and borne into heaven: *Arise, O Lord, into thy resting-place: Thou and the ark of thy holiness* (Ps. cxxxi. 8). Thus was she exempt from all malediction, and therefore " blessed amongst women."[1]

We cannot forget that *caro Christi caro Mariæ:* the flesh of Christ is that of Mary. The human nature He assumed was wholly ministered to Him by His Mother. Could the Son allow the virgin body in which He had been tabernacled and in which He was clothed with our nature, to become the food of corruption? Well may St. John of Damascus ask: " How should corruption dare to touch the body which had received Life Himself?"[2] And if Mary crushed the serpent of sin beneath

[1] *Expositio in Salut. Angel.*

[2] Homilia II. in Dormit. B.V.M., 3 Pat. Gr. xcvi. 728.

her heel, must she not also have crushed the serpent of death? Would her victory have been absolute or universal, as absolute as the enmity which existed between her and the serpent, and between her seed and the serpent, if the serpent could have claimed her body in the tomb as an object upon which that corruption which is a consequence of sin should work its will? Mary was exempt from sin. She must also be exempt from the corruption of the tomb. In the full sense of immunity from the corruption of the tomb must the words be applied to the Immaculate as they were applied to her alone with regard to exemption from sin: *Thou shalt not die; for this law is not made for thee, but for all others.*[1]

For the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is the complement of her Immaculate Conception, the final expression of God's love for her He had chosen and prepared to occupy the unique position to which she had been predestined from eternity. When we realise what this choice meant, and all that was implied in Mary's preparation for the Divine Motherhood; when we further realise the extraordinary Graces of which she was the recipient, and her stupendous sanctity and perfection in consequence of those Graces, we feel that God was compelled, as it were, to complete His

[1] Esth. xv. 13.

work by the crowning Grace of the Assumption. With all reverence we say that, considering what Mary's life had been, and how filled with Grace had been each moment of it, there would have been an incompleteness and a want of symmetry in it if she had not been assumed body and soul into heaven, as there would have been a break in the continuity of the favours conferred upon her by God if this final favour had been withheld.

Those who have died in God's friendship shall have a place in His kingdom proportionate to the intensity of their Charity. A throne was promised to each of the Apostles as a reward of their fidelity,[1] and a kingdom to all who shall "seek first the kingdom of God and His justice."[2] When this is so in the case of each servant of God, what place did He reserve for His Mother? From what has been said of the sanctity and perfection of our Blessed Lady, and of her Charity and merits, we may logically conclude that her position in heaven is supreme over all other creatures, a position in keeping with her dignity, and proportionate to her love. That position is the position of Queen. St. John from his island of exile beheld the "great sign" of "a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars."

[1] Luke xxii. 30. [2] *Ibid.* xii. 32.

It was the vision of the Immaculate! She could not occupy a position in heaven that was lower than her position on earth, and that, as we know, was unique. She alone was, and she alone shall ever be, the Mother of God. Therefore, as she was "exalted above the choir of Angels" even when she was a wayfarer in this vale of tears, so is she their Sovereign Queen in the Kingdom of God. No other crown would have been worthy to grace the brow of her who had been crowned by God Himself with the crown of Divine Motherhood. Fittingly may we apply to our Blessed Lady the words of King Assuerus to Aman: "What ought to be done to the woman whom the king is desirous to honour? . . . The woman whom the king desireth to honour ought to be clothed with the king's apparel . . . and to have the royal crown upon her head. And let the first of the king's princes and nobles . . . proclaim before her and say: Thus shall she be honoured whom the king hath a mind to honour."[1] God honoured Mary from eternity in choosing her to be His Mother, in preparing her for her office by His extraordinary Graces that she might be a worthy Mother. He must honour her through eternity by placing "her on His right hand in gilded clothing."[2]

[1] Esth. vi. 6–9. [2] Ps. xliv. 10.

St. Paul says of our Divine Lord: "He sitteth at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Being so much better than the angels, as He hath inherited a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels hath He said at any time: *Thou art My son, to-day have I begotten thee?* And again, *I will be to him a Father*, and he shall be to Me a son? . . . But to which of the angels said He at any time: *Sit on My right hand, until I make thy enemies thy footstool?* Are they not all ministering spirits sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?[1]" "Due proportion being observed," says Father Terrien, "these words show forth the fundamental title of the Immaculate. She also is as far uplifted above Angels and men as the name she has inherited is more excellent than theirs. For to what Angel, to what human being, has the Son of God ever said: 'Thou art My Mother, to-day have I been born of thee'? All are ministers; she alone, although calling herself a handmaid, can say to Jesus Christ, the Lord of all: 'I am Thy Mother, Thou art my Son.' To what Angels, therefore, or to what human being has Jesus Christ ever said with the same truth and appositeness as to the Virgin Mother: 'Sit on My right hand and share My throne, My inheritance, all that

[1] Heb. i. 3–13.

My humanity possesses of glory, power, and beatitude'?"[1] Just because Mary is the Mother of Him to Whom were addressed the words: "Ask of Me, and I will give thee the Gentiles for thy inheritance and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession,"[2] does she share in the universal dominion of her Son. He is King. His Mother is Queen. In rising from the dead, and in "ascending on high," Jesus Christ "led captivity captive,"[3] and reigns as the Ideal Man. In her Assumption into heaven, and in her participation in the glory and power of her Son, Mary reigns as the Ideal Woman, "the woman" of the Promise through whom the serpent's craft was frustrated and sin destroyed. And hence we say with the Angelical that, "as Mary's merits were greater than those of all other creatures, it was but meet that she should reign over them all."[4] Jesus Christ, God Incarnate, was her Son. He was hers as no other child belongs to the mother who bore him. The natural love of a child for his mother was intensified in Him, therefore, beyond all human conception, and we may legitimately

[1] *Op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 409.

[2] Ps. ii. 8.

[3] Eph. iv. 8.

[4] "*Habuit meritum omnium et amplius, ita congruum fuit ut super omnes ponatur*," Serm. lvii., *in Assumpt.*, *ap.* Lepicier, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

infer that this intense love would urge Him to give proof of it by associating His Mother with Him in His Kingdom, by a delegation of power as well as by a participation in His glory, greater than that received by any other creature. Mary had not been a mere passive instrument in the hands of God: she had fully and freely co-operated with Him in the Mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption. She had shared in the toil and labours, the weariness and sufferings of her Son; she had been "the handmaid of the Lord" even on the Hill of Sacrifice. Therefore did she experience after her death God's effective love in the fullest manner, as she had experienced it each instant of her life. There was no interruption of the favours, no cessation of the Graces which made her the Mother of Divine Grace. In the beginning of her life that Grace had made her the Immaculate. After her death it crowned her Queen of Heaven and of Earth, that in her new position she might be gracious unto all who are her subjects because they have been ransomed by her Son.

Chapter IX

THE MOTHER OF MANKIND

IN the words of the Promise[1] there is a very marked antithesis between the serpent and "the woman," between the seed of the serpent and that of "the woman," an antithesis which affects not only the personality but also the office of "the woman." Moreover, the fact that the promise was made in reference to one who should be Eve's descendant emphasises the contrast between Eve and "the woman." Eve had failed. The perfection, therefore, from which she had fallen should be realised in her descendant. She whose heel was to crush the head of the serpent, and whose seed was to destroy the dominion of sin and death which the revolt of our first parents had established in the world, should not only undo the havoc Eve had wrought, but should be in reality what Eve had failed to be, "Mother of the Living." God's hopes had been destroyed and His plan frustrated by the disobedience of our first parents, with the result that Adam was not head of the human race in the full sense, nor

[1] Gen. ii. 15.

Eve the mother of mankind. By their sin they had lost God's crowning gift, the supernatural life, and they had furthermore inflicted that loss upon their children. But God would not suffer His designs to be thwarted by any creature. He would uplift man and place the supernatural life once again within his reach. He would vanquish the serpent and defeat his purpose. He would accomplish this by the "seed" of "the woman." Her seed, therefore, should be the real head of the human race; and "the woman" should be the true Mother of Mankind, the Second Eve, the Mother of the Living because the Mother of Him Who came "that men might have life and have it more abundantly."[1]

This position of our Blessed Lady as the Second Eve has ever been recognised in the Church. Several of the Fathers allude to our Lady in express terms as fulfilling the functions of Eve; and, as Cardinal Newman has shown, they insist that "she was *not* a mere instrument in the Incarnation . . . they declare she co-operated in our salvation."[2] He shows that St. Justin Martyr, St. Irenæus, and Tertullian "do not speak of the Blessed Virgin merely as the physical

[1] *Cf.* John x. 10.

[2] Letter to Pusey in *Difficulties of Anglicans*, vol. ii., p. 36. Longmans, Green and Co, 1900.

instrument of our Lord's taking flesh, but as an intelligent, responsible cause of it; her faith and obedience being accessories to the Incarnation and gaining it as her reward. As Eve failed in these virtues, and thereby brought on the fall of the race in Adam, so Mary by means of the same had a part in its restoration."[1] A single quotation from one of the Fathers will give point to the Cardinal's words. St. Irenæus says: "As Eve by the speech of the Angel was seduced, so as to flee God, transgressing His word, so Mary received the good tidings by means of the Angel's speech, so as to bear God within her, being obedient to His word. And, though the one had disobeyed God, yet the other was drawn to obey God; that of the virgin Eve the Virgin Mary might become the advocate. And, as by a virgin the human race had been bound to death, by a Virgin it is saved, the balance being preserved, a virgin's disobedience by a Virgin's obedience."[2]

Predestined "from of old and before the world was made," to be the Mother of the Redeemer, our Blessed Lady became the Mother of the redeemed and was confirmed in that office on Calvary. For the words of her Divine Son were

[1] Letter to Pusey in *Difficulties of Anglicans*, vol. ii., p. 35.

[2] *Adv. Hær.* v. 19. Cardinal Newman's translation, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

not symbolical only, but effective; and as the disciple to whom Jesus committed His Mother was the representative of the race of man for whom He suffered and died, so was the Mother of Jesus made Mother of men in becoming the mother to St. John. We are witnesses of the pangs of a spiritual childbirth on Calvary that was universal in its effectiveness; and as Jesus died for all men, the Mother who gave Him to us was given to us to be our Mother, that she might mould and fashion "those whom God foreknew," that they might "be made conformable to the image of His Son."

"To us she is always *the* Mother," says a modern writer, "and this is scarcely removed from being *our* Mother. Mary would thus be the Mother of Christendom though the Lord had not adopted us as His brothers, and though He had not specially so designated her. But He has so designated her, and He has so adopted us. Our religious instinct, our natural intelligence anticipates or at least accepts our Lord's appointment. Mother, we learn to call her who was the Mother of Jesus. . . . It is impossible to overestimate the effect—one would not say in the militant progress of the Christian Creed, but in its after-recognition—of the simple revelation of the Fatherhood of God. But while God was

revealed to us as our Father, there was coincidently the manifestation of one among ourselves as the Mother of Christendom. No one needs to listen to argument upon the association of the name of Mother. Now Christianity appeals—the life and death of our Lord is full of it—to our affections as much as it satisfies our understanding and spiritual craving. Somewhere in Christianity we might anticipate that the most moving of our associations would appear. It appears blazingly on the first page. Can you omit the Mother and Child from Christianity? Can you deny the Mother of Bethlehem to be our Mother as well?"[1] No Catholic would ever dream of denying the Motherhood of Mary; and the Church in teaching the Communion of Saints acknowledges this Motherhood as the complement of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Jesus Christ. Where this relationship of the Immaculate is ignored there is an absence of solidarity amongst men. There is no "Church" in the real sense. There may be a school of thought, a system of philosophy, but there is not the cohesion which is characteristic of the Mystical body of Christ.[2]

[1] *The Mother of Jesus*, by J. Herbert Williams, pp. 178–179. London, 1906.

[2] *Cf. Apologie des Christenthums*, by Father Albert-Maria Weiss, O.P., French translation, vol. x., pp. 275 *sqq.*

The Mother of God is also Mother of mankind, and being so, she was endowed with special Graces for her office. As Mother of the human race, Mary is Mediatrix, Co-operatrix and Intercessor, a threefold office which is summed up in the title by which we address her in her Litany: *Refugium Peccatorum*, The Refuge of Sinners.

The functions of a mediator, as St. Thomas tells us, imply "the bringing together of extremes." The extremes in the present case are God and man, each separated from the other by sin, each united to the other by Jesus Christ, Who, therefore, is the perfect Mediator between God and man, in that by His death He reconciled man to God. He is the "one mediator of God and men" as the Apostle tells us.[1] Why seek for another? The mediation of Jesus Christ is infinite; it was also essential. No other mediation on the part of any creature could ever be of such efficacy as that of our Divine Lord. All this is absolutely true; and yet the infinite and necessary mediation of Jesus Christ does not exclude the finite mediation of His Mother, when such mediation makes for the union of man with God.[2] There is mediation of influence, of association, of disposing power, and such according to the teaching of the

[1] 1 Tim. ii. 5.

[2] *Sum Theol.*, III. Pars, Q. XXI., A. 1.

Church is the mediation of our Blessed Lady, who is styled by Pius IX. "the most powerful Mediatrix and Reconciler in the whole world before her only begotten Son."[1]

From the words of the Sovereign Pontiff we learn the nature of our Lady's mediation. It is not the direct mediation between humanity and God; it is the mediation of a mother, strengthened by the influence and supported by all the associations which attach to a mother's name and office, in the presence of her Son, on behalf of those other children of hers whom He in dying committed to her care.

This is shown forth in the Liturgy. The Church accepts the fact of Mary's Motherhood of men and then prays that she will "show herself a Mother." But in what manner is the Mother of God to show her maternal solicitude for us? By God's acceptance of our supplications *through* her.[2]

[1] Bull *Ineffabilis.*

[2] *Monstra te esse Matrem:*
Sumat per te preces,
Qui pro nobis natus
Tulit esse tuus.

"Show thyself a watchful mother;
And may He our pleadings hear,
Who for us a helpless Infant
Owned thee for His Mother dear."

(Hymn for Vespers of our Lady. Translated by Father Aylward, O.P.)

In other words, the Church prays that Jesus Christ, the One, Perfect, and only Mediator before His Eternal Father, will hearken to our petitions when they are presented to Him by His Mother. This is mediation. Can a son refuse his mother's request? Can Jesus refuse the request of Mary His Mother on behalf of us His brethren? "*What is thy petition . . . that it may be granted thee? And what wilt thou have done: although thou ask the half of my kingdom, thou shalt have it. Then she answered: If I have found favour in thy sight, O King . . . give me . . . my people for which I request. But he, as the manner was, held out the golden sceptre with his hand, which was a sign of clemency.*"[1]

As Mother of the human race, Mary also co-operated in its redemption, for she is intimately united with her Divine Son in the economy of man's salvation. The Divine Maternity was not forced upon her; she was perfectly free, as has been already stated, either to accept or refuse the dignity. She accepted it, and in pronouncing her "Fiat" Mary acted, not as a mere individual, but as the representative of the human race.[2] Her consent was necessary for the accomplishment of the Mystery, for as we have said, Mary was not merely an instrument that God might use and set

[1] Esth. vii. 2–3; viii. 4. [2] *Sum. Theol.*, III. Pars, Q. XXX., A. 1.

aside, or merely a substitute in the place of any other. She had been chosen by God, therefore she was necessarily included in the Divine Plan as the one human being who, according to the designs of God, was essential to their fulfilment. Eve had wrought ruin for the human race by her free, deliberate consent to the suggestions of the Evil One; Mary repaired the injury inflicted by Eve in freely consenting to be the Mother of God. Hence, from the very beginning of the work of reparation Mary co-operated fully, freely, and intelligently with God's purpose in the Incarnation.

Now the purpose of the Incarnation, as the Creed shows us, was man's salvation. The Word was made flesh *propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem* (for us men and for our salvation); and the manner in which the Incarnation was accomplished is expressed in the terms: "*Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto EX MARIA VIRGINE*" (and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary). The Son and His Mother are inseparable. Her co-operation was necessary to the Incarnation, but that co-operation did not cease when the Mystery was wrought. It continued throughout the life of Jesus Christ and was renewed on Calvary, where the Mother merited our salvation in union with her Son.[1]

[1] *Cf.* Lepicier, *op. cit.*, pp. 388 *sqq.*

We have seen that an act is meritorious when it is morally good, is performed freely, under the influence of Divine Grace, by one who is a wayfarer towards heaven, and who performs the act for God. We have also seen that each act of our Blessed Lady was a meritorious act, and have given the reasons for the statement.[1] It is a theological principle that the Mother of God, because of her union with Him, has merited *de congruo*—that is, according to the fitness of things—whatever her Divine Son has merited in strict justice, or *de condigno*.[2] By His death on the Cross Jesus

[1] *Vide supra*, ch. v.

[2] St. Thomas (Ia.-IIa., Q. CXIV., A. 6) formulates this principle when he says that "since one in the state of grace does God's will, it is fitting (*congruum est*) that, according to the degree of friendship, God should accede to the request of such a one when he prays for another's salvation, provided that other does not impede the request." Hence St. Paul (1 Cor. iii. 9) terms us "God's coadjutors." This principle is insinuated in the Office for the Feast of the Seven Dolours, while the reason for it, the perfect conformity of our Lady's will with God's will, is repeatedly insisted upon by the Fathers, who call her "Mother of Grace," "Mother of Salvation," "Mother of Life." It would seem that it is to the insufficient attention paid to this principle that Blessed Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort, O.P., refers when he complains that "the greater part of Christians, even the most learned, do not know the necessary union which there is between Jesus and His Mother." (*True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, Father Faber's translation, 8th ed., p. 40. *Cf.* Lepicier, *op. cit.*, pp. 389–399.)

Christ merited our salvation in the most absolute manner. The Grace which is indispensably necessary for us, and without which we can do nothing, has been merited for us by Christ on Calvary. "That Grace was His not only as an individual but also because He is the Head of the Church of which we are the members, that from the Head it might overflow upon the members. Whoever is established in Grace and suffers for justice' sake, merits eternal life, as St. Matthew says: Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.[1] Christ, therefore, by His Passion, merited salvation, not only for Himself but also for all His members."[2] But the Mother of God is also the Mother of Christ's Mystical Body. She could not merit our salvation in the strict sense, since she was a creature and not divine. But because of her union with God, her perfect conformity with His will, and her burning Charity, she could and did merit our salvation. Her conformity to the will of God and her Charity were so perfect that she willed and loved only what and as God willed and loved. Hence, like Him, and in order to accomplish His designs, Mary did not spare her only-begotten Son for our sake, and so she merited the salvation of those other children of hers, for

[1] v. 10. [2] *Sum. Theol.*, III. Pars, Q. XLVIII., A. 1.

whom He suffered and died. Nor may we forget that the actions of our Blessed Lady as Mother of God take on a dignity and value which is immeasurable, and that they were the outcome of Charity and therefore meritorious each of them. Mary possessed the plenitude of Charity as she possessed the fulness of Grace. She is the Mother of Fair Love, a love so great that it is surpassed by the infinite love of God alone; and, loving God so intensely, she desired in consequence what He desired, with all the ardour and strength of her being.

The Sacrifice of the Cross is the only necessary sacrifice—necessary in the sense that it had been preordained by God. It alone wrought our salvation and redemption; alone, that Sacrifice made superabundant satisfaction for our sins. But inasmuch as this Sacrifice was the culminating point of the purpose of the Incarnation, and the free consent of the Virgin of Nazareth was required for the accomplishment of this Mystery, in giving her consent, Mary became intimately associated with God in the purpose of the Incarnation and subsequent Sacrifice. She had her place at the Altar, and it was as a Mother who offered to God all she loved and possessed—her Son. In the sufferings of Jesus the anguish of Mary was included as a part, though not an essential

part, of the price that was paid. And if the Apostle could rejoice that by his sufferings he filled up "those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ,"[1] with greater reason could the Mother rejoice that her sorrows filled up what was "wanting of the sufferings" of her Son, and thus unite her sacrifice with His for the sins of the world.

The third function which our Blessed Lady exercises as Mother of the human race is that of Intercession. It is of faith that the saints offer our prayers to God and plead for us; while the greater the degree of Charity possessed by them, and the more intimate their union with God in consequence of this Charity, the more efficacious will be their intercession. "Prayer is made to another in a twofold manner," says St. Thomas. "First, as if the one to whom we pray will *grant* our request; secondly, as if he will *obtain* our request. We pray to God alone in the first manner, in that, as all our petitions should be made that we may obtain grace and glory, it is God alone Who bestows these gifts: *The Lord will give grace and glory*.[2] But we pray to the Angels and Saints in the second way, not that God may come to know our wants through them, but that our petitions may be granted on account

[1] Col. i. 24. [2] Ps. lxxxiii. 12.

of their merits and intercession. Hence we read in the Apocalypse: *And the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the Saints ascended up before God from the hand of the Angel.*[1] This may also be understood from the manner in which the Church prays: for we ask mercy from the Holy Trinity, but we ask the Saints to pray for us."[2] How powerful, then, must be the intercession of the Queen of Saints! Her Charity is only surpassed by the everlasting love of God; her union with God by Grace and love is far beyond that of any other creature and of all creatures collectively; and her Divine Maternity, by uniting her so closely to God, has endowed her with a power greater than that wielded by all God's Angels and Saints together.[3] It is but meet and natural that Mary should possess this power of pleading in a super-eminent manner. The unique position she occupies as Mother of God and Mother of mankind gives her this power. Love makes a mother importunate and her pleading resistless. Just because Mary loved God so intensely, and so ardently desired that His designs should be accomplished; just because she loves us, not only because her Son loves us and died to prove His love, but also because He gave us to her and her

[1] viii. 4. [2] *Sum. Theol.*, II.-II., Q. LXXXIII., A. 4.
[3] *Cf.* Lepicier, *op. cit.*, pp. 404–405.

to us as His last legacy, does she desire to assist us by interceding for us, knowing, as no other creature can possibly understand, that in pleading for us she gives glory to God and furthers the purpose of the Incarnation.

Yet we are not to think that our Blessed Mother pleads for all men with equal insistence and power. True, she is the Mother of all, but there are many who reject her help and refuse to recognise her claims upon them, or her power of intercession. She has the desire to succour all men, but because her will is in the most perfect conformity with the Will of God, she only wills absolutely and efficaciously whatever is the absolute and efficacious Will of the Eternal. We may take, therefore, the words of Scripture: *Ego diligentes me diligo* (I love them that love me),[1] as the standard of the extent and efficacity of our Lady's intercession. We do not imply that she will not plead for sinners. She is the "Refuge of Sinners," and we pray to her to "pray for us sinners" every day of our exile in this vale of tears. But Mary is not and cannot be a "refuge" to those who persist in sin, in the presumptuous hope that she will intercede for them and win mercy for them despite themselves. "Nothing in Christianity is more detestable than this diabolical presump-

[1] Prov. viii. 17.

tion," says Blessed Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort. "For how can we say truly that we love and honour our Blessed Lady, when by our sins we are pitilessly piercing, wounding, crucifying, and outraging Jesus Christ her Son? If Mary laid down a law to herself to save by her mercy this sort of people, she would be authorising crime, and assisting to crucify and outrage her Son. Who would dare to think such a thought as that?"[1]

Our Blessed Lady will not intercede for such as these. But for the sinner who strives to break with sin, for the weary and desponding, for all who recognise that she *is* their Mother, she will show a Mother's love and plead with a Mother's importunity, and her pleading will not be in vain. "And the king said to her: My Mother, ask; for I must not turn away thy face."[2]

[1] *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin.* Father Faber's translation, 8th ed., p. 69.

[2] 3 Kings ii. 20.

Chapter X

MARY THE ALMONER OF DIVINE GRACE

"THE devotional routine of worship within quoted bears witness to her acceptance by the Church,"[1] says an author already of the opinion that all gifts come through Mary. It is a constant *non sequitur* to external appreciation that when a Catholic is in special need of divine aid, when he is to have recourse to prayer, he is universally recommended to say a "Hail Mary." We need scarcely say that everyday experience confirms the truth of this statement; and while Catholics in general may have but little explicit knowledge of the opinion given above, that "all gifts come through Mary," in other words, that the Mother of God is the channel of God's Grace, the true Catholic instinct is in this direction.

There are two facts regarding our Blessed Lady accepted by all Catholics and which have ever

[1] J. Herbert Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 149. The whole chapter, the third in the second part, is instructive.

been so accepted: Mary is the Mother of God, Mary is the Mother of men; and because of her Divine Maternity she enjoys the sovereignty of a Queen. Her Son is King by right divine and by right of conquest, and His sovereignty is universal. It is to the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, that the pledge is given: *Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the Gentiles for Thy inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for Thy possession.*[1] The sovereignty of the Mother is co-extensive with the inheritance of her Son. He has redeemed all men. Mary is therefore their Queen, and as such must rule as well as reign. What the sovereignty of our Lady implies we have seen when we considered her claims to be Mediatrix, Co-operatrix, and Intercessor; we also saw that her claims to exercise these functions are rooted in her free and intelligent co-operation with God in the work of man's salvation and redemption. Does our Lady's sovereignty extend further than mediation and intercession? Does she still co-operate with the Eternal in the work of man's salvation?—still actively further God's designs in the Incarnation? These are questions we shall attempt to answer now.

The purpose of the Incarnation is realised in each soul by means of that Sanctifying Grace

[1] Ps. ii. 8.

which Jesus Christ has merited for us. It is through the reception of this Grace that human souls "put on the new man, who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth."[1] Mary, as Mother of God, was the channel of the Incarnation: she still is the channel of Divine Grace; and all the grace that men receive from God comes to them through her who gave to them their Redeemer. This is but an opinion; it is not the defined teaching of the Church. But it is the opinion of some of the deepest theologians and the greatest Saints, while it has also received the approval of more than one Supreme Pontiff.

Before we proceed further it will be advisable to consider for a moment the nature of our Lady's intercession. It is not merely intercession for all men in general but for each one in particular. This doctrine is the outcome of principles which theologians accept as certain. St. Thomas teaches that: "Each created intelligence understands in the Word, not indeed, all things, but the more, the more perfect its vision of the Word. And in the Word, the knowledge of whatever is of interest to them is not withheld from the blessed."[2] Hence, a father or mother will have

[1] Eph. iv. 24.

[2] *Sum. Theol.*, III. Pars, Q. X., A. 2; *cf. De Veritate*, Q. VIII., A. 4; Q. XX., A. 4.

knowledge in heaven of whatever affects their children. They will see the difficulties and dangers their children have to face, the trials they have to bear, their joys and sorrows, their hopes and fears. A mother does not cease to be a mother when she enjoys the vision of God. Her children are hers for ever; the relationship cannot be broken; and her interest in them is not lessened but intensified because of the clear vision she possesses and the happiness that is hers. If she showed her love of and interest in her children in life, she will continue to show that love and interest in them now that she is in heaven; consequently, she will pray for them, plead for them before God, that they may never be separated from her for eternity.

Mary, the Mother of God, is also our Mother; Mother of the human race; Mother of each individual. The difficulties, dangers, temptations, and trials of each of her children are known to her: Can she be indifferent to them? Would she be really a Mother, or show a Mother's love of or take a Mother's interest in us her children? Would she have the honour of her Divine Son at heart if she did not help us by making intercession for each of us when such intercession makes for the triumph of her Son and the reign of God in each individual soul? Her Motherhood of men

began when she accepted the Motherhood of God, and it was ratified and confirmed on Calvary. Jesus Christ, "having loved His own, loved them to the end." It is the same with His Mother. We are her children, therefore will she love us to the end. So long as there is a human being on earth there is one who has a claim upon our Lady's care, one to be followed by her maternal love through all the vicissitudes of life until the end, so that when her Divine Son shall behold Himself reflected in such a soul, He may turn to her into whose keeping He entrusted it that it might be "made conformable" to Him, and repeat once more His words from the Cross: "Mother, behold thy son!"

Mary does not cease to be our Mother because she is the Queen of Heaven. She is now and for ever "full of Grace," *Plena sibi*, *superplena nobis*, and overflowing with Grace for us. "It is a wonderful thing for any Saint to possess grace that is sufficient to save many souls," says St. Thomas, but "the supreme degree of plenitude is to possess grace sufficient to save the whole human race. This is the plenitude of grace possessed by Christ and His Mother. For you may obtain salvation from this glorious Virgin in *every* danger. . . . You may have her assistance in *every* act of virtue, and hence she says

in Ecclesiasticus: *In me is all grace of the way and of truth.*"[1]

According to St. Thomas, therefore, our Blessed Lady can assist us to practise virtue, and give us strength to overcome every temptation; in other words, she can help us to work out our salvation. Her power, then, is not a sterile power, nor merely nominal; it means actual assistance. Hence, when St. Thomas teaches that our Blessed Lady can win Grace for us, and that we may obtain salvation from her, it is the same as if he taught that she actually obtains this Grace we need and that we actually win salvation from her. In this teaching the Angelical follows closely in the footsteps of his master, Blessed Albert the Great, who calls our Blessed Lady "the Universal Almoner of all good."[2] Other doctors taught the same opinion previously. St. Peter Damian says: "In thy hands are the treasures of divine mercy;"[3] and St. Anselm exclaims: "If thou keep silence no other can pray for or assist us: but if thou wilt intercede, all others may pray and plead for us."[4] St. Bernard of Clairvaux addresses us in the following words: "O thou, whosoever thou art, that

[1] *Expositio super Salut. Angelica.*

[2] *Omnium bonitatem universaliter distributiva. Quæst. super Missus est,* xxix.

[3] Serm. I., *De Nativitate.* [4] Orat. 45. *Ad B. Virginem.*

knowest thyself to be here not so much walking upon firm ground as battered to and fro by the gales and storms of this life's ocean, if thou wouldst not be overwhelmed by the tempest, keep thine eye upon this Star's clear shining. If the hurricanes of temptation arise against thee, or thou art running upon the rocks of trouble, look to the Star, call upon Mary. . . . In danger, in difficulty, or in doubt, think of Mary, call upon Mary. . . . If thou follow her, thou wilt never go astray. If thou pray to her, thou wilt never have need to despair. . . . If she hold thee, thou wilt never be weary. If she keep thee, thou wilt reach home safe at last."[1] Again he says: "She openeth her bosom of mercy to all, that of her fulness all may receive: the captive, ransom; the sick, health; the sorrowful, comfort; the sinful, pardon; the righteous, grace; even Angels, gladness."[2] But it is in his Sermon *De Aquæductu*, and his Homily for the Nativity of our Blessed Lady, that we find St. Bernard's most explicit teaching on this question: "Take away the sun which gives light to the world: where, then, is day? Take away Mary, the Star of the Sea, a vast and limitless sea: what remains save blinding mist, the shadow of death, and blackest darkness?

[1] Sermo ii., sup. *Missus est.* Marquess of Bute's translation.
[2] Sermo xcviii. Marquess of Bute's translation.

Let us, therefore, reverence Mary with our whole heart, with all the affection of our soul, with all our loyalty, for this is the will of Him Who desires that we shall obtain everything through Mary."[1] "God has decreed that we shall receive nothing unless it comes through Mary's hands."[2] We address the Mother of God as the "Virgin most Powerful," and St. Bonaventure gives the reason for our doing so, in the following words: "Because the Almighty is with thee . . . therefore art thou all-powerful *with* Him, thou art all-powerful *by* Him, and thou art all-powerful *before* Him, so that thou canst say: My power is in Jerusalem."[3] "God the Son has communicated to His Mother," says Blessed Louis de Montfort, "all that He has acquired by His life and His death, His infinite merits and His admirable virtues; and He has made her the treasuress of all that His Father has given Him for His inheritance. It is by her that He applies His merits to His members, and that He communicates His virtues, and distributes His grace. She is His mysterious canal; she is His aqueduct, through which He makes His mercies flow gently and abundantly. To Mary,

[1] *Sermo de Aquæductu.*

[2] "*Nihil nos habere voluit quod per Mariæ manus non transiret*" (Serm. III., in Vigil. Domini., No. 10).

[3] *Speculum* viii.

His faithful Spouse, God the Holy Ghost has communicated His unspeakable gifts; and He has chosen her to be the dispensatrix of all He possesses, in such sort that she distributes to whom she wills, as much as she wills, as she wills, and when she wills, all His gifts and graces. The Holy Ghost gives no heavenly gift to men which He does not pass through her virginal hands."[1]

We have said that more than one Sovereign Pontiff has approved of this doctrine: we should have said that several Popes have emphatically taught it. Benedict XIV. calls Mary "the heavenly canal by which all graces and all gifts come to us."[2] In his Encyclical on the Jubilee of the Immaculate Conception, the late Pope Pius X. styles our Lady "the supreme ministrant in the distribution of grace."[3] Leo XIII. makes St. Bernardine of Siena's words his own when he says that "every grace which is bestowed upon man comes to him by three perfectly ordered degrees: God communicates the grace to Christ; from Christ it passes to the Holy Virgin; we receive it from Mary's hands."[4]

We are all aware that this glorious Pontiff

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 12–13.
[2] Bull, *Gloriosæ Dominæ.*
[3] *Ea . . . est princeps largiendarum gratiarum ministra.*
[4] Encyclical on the Rosary, *Jucunda semper*, September 8, 1894.

summoned the Catholic world to beg the intercession of the Mother of God, by the Rosary, against the dangers which threatened the Church and the Faith. Year after year he issued his Encyclicals in which, as Supreme Doctor of the Church, he insistently taught the power and efficacy of this form of prayer. He consecrated the month of October to our Lady of the Rosary; ordered the public recitation of the Rosary each day during the month, and added another invocation to our Lady in the Litany of Loreto—"Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, pray for us." This attitude of the Sovereign Pontiffs proves that, though nothing has been defined in this matter, we are in agreement with the mind of the Church when we say that the Mother of God is the Almoner of Divine Grace.[1]

[1] *Cf.* Justin of Mieckow, O.P., *op. cit.*, Conf. 129. § 6; Hugon, O.P., *op. cit.*, pp. 240–244; Terrien, S.J., *op. cit.*, vol. iii., l. v., ch. i., ii.; l. vii., ch. iii. Dante gave expression to the instinctive and traditional opinion of the Catholic mind in the verse:

Donna, se'tanto grande, e tanto vali,
Che qual vuol grazia, e a te non ricorre,
Sua dizianza vuol volar senz'ali.

("Lady, thou art so great and hast such worth, that if there be who would have grace, yet betaketh not himself to thee, his longeth seeketh to fly without wings.") (*Paradiso*, xxxiii. 13–15. Wicksteed's translation). Possibly St. Antoninus, O.P., Archbishop of Florence, "borrowed the thought from Dante's

We have seen what some of the Saints and Popes have said in reference to this doctrine. Their teaching is consonant with the Liturgy of the Church. Not only does the Church formally ask that Jesus Christ will "accept our prayers *through* her of whom He was born," but in the Canon of the Mass she recognises the position and power of the Mother of God in the prayer *Communicantes:* "Communicating with, and honouring in the first place the memory of the glorious and ever Virgin Mary, Mother of our Lord and God Jesus Christ; as also of the blessed Apostles and Martyrs . . . and of all Thy Saints; by whose merits and prayers grant that we may be in all things defended by the help of Thy protection."

Theologians began to treat the question in the fifteenth century, but it was only in the seventeenth century that it came to receive more formal and explicit recognition.[1] Our Lady's claims were defended against the attacks of certain writers who were antagonistic to the popular

immortal poem," says Father Terrien (*op. cit.*, vol. iii., p. 575, note), when he wrote of our Lady: *Qui petit sine ipsa duce, sine alis tentat volare* (*Sum. Theol.*, p. iv., tit. 15, c. 22, § 9), "Whoso makes a request without her as guide, seeks to fly without wings."

[1] Terrien, *op. cit.*, vol. iii., pp. 578–581.

devotion to the Mother of God. A number of theologians took up the cause of the Immaculate, and foremost amongst them was a Saint who is also a Doctor of the Church, St. Alphonsus Liguori. He teaches in the most express terms, that all graces without exception are conferred upon us by God through His Blessed Mother. Further on we shall give some of the Saint's reasons for his statement. Suarez, S.J.,[1] Vega, S.J.,[2] Contenson, O.P.,[3] and Justin of Mieckow, O.P.,[4] in former times, were firm defenders of this doctrine, while in our own days, to mention only a few theologians, it is taught by Father Lepicier,[5] Father Hugon, O.P.,[6] and Father Terrien, S.J.[7]

Now it is very remarkable that, when our Lord communicated his grace on solemn occasions, He did so through the instrumentality of His Mother. Three occasions on which this occurred stand out clearly: the Visitation to St. Elizabeth, the Marriage-Feast at Cana, and Calvary. On these occasions, the graces conferred are typical of those which extend over the entire spiritual life of Man: the Graces of Vocation, of Justification, and of

[1] *De Myst. Vitæ Christi*, d. 23, sect. 3, 5.
[2] *Theol. Mariana*, Palestra xxix., Cert. iv.
[3] *Theol. Ment. et Cord.*, lib. x., *passim*.
[4] *Op. cit.*, Conf. 129.
[5] *Op. cit.*, pp. 404 *sqq.*
[6] *Op. cit.*, pp. 257 *sqq.*
[7] *Op. cit.*, vol. iii., liv. vii., c. 3 and 4.

Perseverance. The sanctification of the unborn Baptist represents the calling of any soul to the supernatural life of Faith. The establishing of the Apostle's belief in Jesus Christ, the result of the miracle at Cana, typifies the justification of the sinner. Finally, St. John is the type of those children of adoption, born of the sufferings of Christ and the sorrows of His Mother, who persevere to the end, and for whom "there is laid up a crown of justice." "In making use of His Mother to communicate this threefold Grace," says Father Hugon, "Christ gives us to understand that all other help must come through her since all other Graces are consequent to, dependent on, and applications of, these three fundamental Graces."[1]

The full purpose of the Incarnation is only realised in each soul when it has been "made conformable to the image of Jesus Christ." When the Mother of Christ became Mother of the Mystical Body of Christ, she took upon herself the duties of a Mother towards that Mystical Body, and must do for all her children what she did for Christ Himself. A mother does not merely conceive and bring forth her children; she nourishes, tends, and safeguards them. The spiritual Maternity of Mary demands similar service. We

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 258–259.

must "in all things grow up in Him who is the head, even Christ"; and such growth and development necessitates a continual outpouring of actual grace each moment of life, until we arrive "unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ."[1] Mary, as the Mother of God and of men, is a Queen, and, as we have seen, her intercessory power is immeasurable. She can obtain for us the grace that is indispensable,[2] and it is in obtaining this grace for us all our life long that she "shows herself a Mother" in reality, and nourishes, tends, and safeguards us until the end.

Furthermore, our Blessed Lady has been fittingly called the *Collum Ecclesiæ*, the neck of the Church. Jesus Christ is the Head, the Holy Ghost is the Heart of the Church. From the Head proceeds all energy and life; the Heart, by its action, causes this life and energy to circulate through each member of the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ. But the head is joined to the body by the neck, and this is the position which God's Mother holds in the Church. Life and energy in the supernatural order, in other words grace, flow from the Head, Jesus Christ, into the body, the Church, through her. Jesus Christ

[1] Eph. iv. 13.

[2] *Regina, che puoi*
Cio che tu vuoi . . . says Dante. *Paradiso*, xxxiii.

is the principle of grace. His Mother has received her fulness of Grace from Him, and is absolutely dependent upon Him for her perfection. But now, as of old, the Son makes use of His Mother to accomplish His designs and communicate His favours. Of "His fulness we all have received, and grace for grace";[1] but, as members of His mystical body we have received that Grace through her who is, and shall for ever be, the link that united the race of man with God in Jesus Christ.

In replying to the objection that, as Jesus Christ is the One Necessary Mediator, consequently we cannot lay claim to the mediation of His Mother, or teach that all Graces come through her, St. Alphonsus replies: "Mediation of justice by way of merit is one thing, and mediation of grace by way of prayer is another. And again, it is one thing to say that God cannot, and another that He will not, grant graces without the intercession of Mary. . . . We most readily admit that Jesus Christ is the only Mediator of Justice . . . and that by His merits He obtains us all graces and salvation; but we may say that Mary is the Mediator of grace; and that receiving all she obtains through Jesus Christ, and because she prays and asks for it in the name of Jesus Christ,

[1] John i. 16.

yet, all the same, whatever graces we receive they come to us through her intercession."[1]

Elsewhere the Saint teaches that, "if all these first fruits of Redemption passed by Mary as the channel through which grace was communicated to the Baptist, the Holy Ghost to Elizabeth, the gift of prophecy to Zachary, and so many other graces to the whole house, the first graces, which, to our knowledge, the Eternal Word had granted on earth after His Incarnation, it is quite correct to believe that from henceforward God made Mary the universal channel, as she is called by St. Bernard, through which all the other graces which our Lord is pleased to dispense to us should pass."[2]

Our Blessed Lady, like Rebecca her foretype, "a most beautiful virgin, and not known to man . . . went down to the spring, and filled her pitcher. . . . And the servant ran to meet her, and said: Give me a little water to drink of thy pitcher. And she answered: Drink, my lord. And quickly she let down the pitcher upon her arm, and gave him to drink. And when he had drunk, she said: I will draw water for thy camels also, till they drink."[3] "Mary 'went down to

[1] *Glories of Mary.* Part I., c. v., pp. 123–124.
[2] *Ibid.*, second part, discourse v., p. 321.
[3] Gen. xxiv. 16-19.

the spring ' of grace by her humility, and became ' full of Grace,' and not only does she in her charity give her faithful servants to drink when they ask her, but even sinners receive of her plenitude ' till they all drink.' "[1]

Mary Immaculate is therefore fully deserving of her title of Mother of Divine Grace. Full of Grace herself, she overflows with Grace for us. Just as " we have not a high priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities,"[2] but One Who has sympathy for us, and everlasting love; One Who is ready to help us, even our Brother; so does it come to pass, that she who gave Him to us, and in giving Him has made us His brethren, becomes a Mother to each of us, the intermediary between her Divine Son and her spiritual children, the instrument of the continued workings of the Incarnation in each human life.

Rightly, then, do we call her *Spes nostra*, Mary our Hope. Rightly do we beg that she will " succour the miserable, help the faint-hearted, comfort the sorrowful, pray for the people, plead for clerics, and make intercession for those virgins who are consecrated to God." All are her children, since all have been redeemed by her Son. Rightly do we ask her, our Advocate, to prove a Mother

[1] *La Vierge Marie et le Plan Divin*, par Auguste Nicolas, liv., iii., c. 5. Paris, 1864.

[2] Heb. iv. 15.

to us in this "vale of tears," to "turn her eyes of mercy towards us," that through her we may obtain the Mercy of God. And with fullest confidence do we pray that, when the time of exile in a strange land is drawing to a close, when "the winter is past" and "the rain is over and gone," our Mother will win for us the crowning grace of perseverance at the last, and "show unto us the blessed fruit of her womb, Jesus."

Chapter XI

QUEEN OF ANGELS; CAUSE OF OUR JOY; COMFORT OF THE AFFLICTED

A HUMAN being, yet Sovereign Lady of the Angelic host; a creature, yet exercising sway in the realms of Divine Justice, and over those upon whose life God has pronounced sentence: these are the claims we make for the Mother of God when we call her Queen of Angels, Cause of our Joy, and Comfort of the Afflicted who expiate their sins in the cleansing fires of Purgatory.

Jesus Christ is the chief of creation, and from His sovereignty none are exempt. God has set Him on His right hand, "above all principality, and power, and virtue, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and he hath subjected all things under his feet."[1] "It is evident," says St. Thomas, "that both men and Angels are destined to one end, the glory of the vision of God. Hence, the Mystical Body of the Church

[1] Eph. i. 21.

is not composed of men only but also of Angels. . . . Wherefore, Christ is not only the Head of mankind but of Angels."[1] This being so, the Mother of Jesus Christ is superior to the Angels in the order of Grace and Glory. She can say in the very language of God: "This is my beloved Son." None of the Angels can claim such a privilege. They stand before the throne of God: "We are Thy servants, whatsoever Thou shalt command us we will do."[2] They are God's messengers;[3] heralds of His manifestations to mankind;[4] and ministers of His Son.[5] But "a throne was set for the king's mother, and she sat on his right hand,"[6] for as Jesus Christ is established at the right hand of His Father and has entered into His inheritance,[7] so is His Mother established in the participation of His power and glory, and in the exercise of the privileges and prerogatives of a Queen.

The transcendent revelation of God was made to the Virgin of Nazareth, and an Angel awaited her words of consent that the Mystery might be accomplished. He "on whom the Angels desire to look,"[8] and who is "above all principality, and

[1] *Sum. Theol.*, III. Pars, Q. CIII., A. 4.
[2] 4 Kings x. 5. [3] *Cf.* Ps. ciii. 4.
[4] Gen. xvi. 7; Num. xxii. 31; Tob. xii. 15–21; Luke ii. 9–10, 13–14. [5] Matt. iv. 11; Luke xxii. 43 [6] 3 Kings ii. 19.
[7] *Sum. Theol.*, III. Pars, Q. LVIII., A. 3. [8] 1 Pet. i. 12.

power, and virtue, and dominion," took flesh in Mary's womb, was carried in her arms, tended by her in the days of His infancy, and "was subject" to her during a period of thirty years. The Divine Maternity, as we have seen in the foregoing pages, demanded extraordinary Grace, Grace in proportion to the dignity and office of Mother of God. The position was unique. So also was the Grace conferred, for that Grace was conferred upon the Mother that she might be *worthy* to occupy the position, and in the fact of the Incarnation we possess divine testimony as to the actual worthiness of our Blessed Lady for the office. No other creature, therefore, either angelic or human, can be compared with Mary in the order of grace. She excels all creatures in dignity, consequently in perfection, since her dignity demanded the highest perfection and the plenitude of grace. And since the degree of glory that is attained is commensurate with the grace conferred and corresponded to, and with the charity that is communicated by grace, it follows that, as the Mother of God surpasses all creatures in Grace and Charity, she transcends them in glory. Grace and glory have been merited for us by Jesus Christ: of His fulness we all have received: but no creature to such an extent as His own Mother. She most closely resembles

Him,[1] and so is uplifted above all other creatures as a Queen ranks superior to her subjects.

So far there is no difficulty. We can really understand how the unique position of our Lady, her extraordinary Grace and Charity, and her proximity to God, would give her the highest place in heaven. There is, however, another question to be answered: Are the Angels indebted in any way to the Mother of God? Have her merits in any way affected them? Has she obtained any Grace for them, any supernatural perfection, or any increase of glory?

Some theologians have taught that the Word would have become incarnate even though man had not sinned. According to this opinion, the sanctification of the Angels was due in the first place to the foreseen merits of the Incarnate Word, and, secondarily, to the merits, also foreseen, of His Mother.

St. Thomas holds the contrary opinion as the one "to which it would seem that assent should preferably be given." His reason for this is as follows. "Whatever is the effect of God's will only, and is beyond anything due to a creature, can only be known in so far as it is revealed in the

[1] *Riguarda omai nella faccia ch' a Cristo piu si somiglia.* ("Look now upon the face that most nearly resembles Christ.") (*Paradiso*, xxxii. 85.)

Sacred Scriptures which are the means by which the Divine Will is made manifest to us. Wherefore, since the Scriptures uniformly state that the sin of our first parents was the reason for the Incarnation, it is more fittingly asserted that the Incarnation was decreed by God as a remedy against sin, in such wise, that if sin had not been committed the Incarnation would not have occurred."[1]

From this teaching, which is more general amongst theologians, it follows that the Angels were not indebted to the merits of "the Word made flesh," or, consequently, to those of His Blessed Mother for the grace which sanctified them, or the glory of the vision of God. This is stated in definite terms by St. Thomas. "Christ as man is the Head of the Angels, but not so specially (*proprie*), or in the same manner as He is Head of the human race, and this for two reasons. First, as regards similarity of nature, for He resembles man specifically in nature but is like to the Angels generically, in that they are endowed with an intellectual nature. Secondly, as regards His influence, for He does not influence the Angels . . . by meriting Grace or by praying for them, since they are already in the state of beatitude."[2]

[1] *Sum. Theol.*, III. Pars, Q. I., A. 3.
[2] *Sent.*, iii. D. 13, Q. 2, A. 2.

Are we to say, then, that neither our Divine Lord nor His Blessed Mother conferred any favour on the Angels, or that the Angelic hosts were not indebted in any way to Jesus and Mary? By no means. Another passage from the writings of St. Thomas shows us that the Angels do actually owe certain gifts and favours to "the man Christ Jesus," and, consequently, to His Mother. "The Angels are not wayfarers as regards the *essential* recompense, hence Christ did not merit it for them. But in a certain sense they are wayfarers in regard to the *accidental* recompense, in so far forth as they minister unto us. In this respect Christ's merits were effectual to them."[1] The essential recompense for every intellectual being is the possession of God, the vision of God face to face, which, as a writer puts it, "is found in the immediate communication of the created mind with the divine mind."[2] It is this vision of God which is the "reward exceeding great" for Angels and men. Hence, the Word of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, together with the Father and the Holy Ghost, is the essential or substantial recompense of all who have entered into the glory of the Kingdom. Everything else is accidental or accessory. The fruition of God

[1] *De Veritate*, Q. XXIX., A. 7, ad. 5.

[2] Bellord, *Meditations on Christian Dogma*, vol. i., p. 124.

alone is the full and final recompense. For this recompense there was of necessity grace in proportion, grace which fitted the Angels for the vision of God. This grace was God's gratuitous gift, and the Angels received it through the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Word, but not "the Word made flesh." It was not merited for them by Jesus Christ, neither was it received by them through Mary's hands. "Take away the humanity of the Word, and, consequently, the Mother of God," says Father Terrien; "the Angels would still enjoy the vision of God in which their essential happiness lies, because the Grace which is the principle of this vision did not come to them either from Jesus or Mary."[1]

Our Blessed Lady, therefore, is not Mother of Divine Grace for the Angels as she is for us. We owe *all* the Grace we receive to Jesus Christ; and as He was given to us by Mary, so the graces He has won for us are still conferred upon us through His Mother, not the graces which make for our accessory happiness only, but that grace which gives us the right to the eternal inheritance.

But the accidental grace conferred upon the Angels—that is, "an increase of knowledge because of the mysteries of salvation; an increase of joy

[1] *Op. cit.*, vol. iv., l. viii., c. vi., p. 139.

because of the restoration of the order in their ranks which Lucifer had disturbed; and an increase of glory because of the triumphs of Christ and His Church "[1]—this has been bestowed upon them by Christ the Son of God and Son of Mary, since as the Incarnate Word, He is above all principality and power; He is their Head because He is the Head of the Church of which they also are members.

With regard to this grace, Mary is Mother of Divine Grace for the Angelic hosts, and her merits have won grace and glory for them, which add to their perfection and increase their happiness. And so St. Antoninus tells us in his *Summa* that—"Since Mary is the Mother of the Saviour of men, she is in a certain sense the principle and source of the glory of the Angels, and may rightly be called their Mother."[2] In the beautiful words of Father Hugon, O.P., "Mary belongs to us more fully than to the Angels; she is our very own; we have cost her more, and she has given more to us than to them. She is only Mother of Grace and Glory that is accidental in the case of the Angels, but she is Mother of all Grace, all glory, of every good to us: *tota mater*, she is wholly a Mother to us. We are the children of her sorrows; the Angels are the heirs of her triumphs.

[1] Hugon, *op. cit.*, pp. 284–285. [2] IV. p., tit. xv., c. xiv.

Her Motherhood of them is all joy; but in our case it is indeed a childbirth with all its attendant suffering and love. Because we have cost so great a price we belong to her and she belongs to us in a special manner. Because we have received greater graces through her we are bound to show greater gratitude. We shall show our gratitude best by being wholly devoted to her."[1]

Dante tells us that St. Bernard commanded him to "look upon the face which most resembles Christ, because its brightness alone could prepare him to behold Christ."[2] He speaks of the Virgin-Mother as "the Queen who can do whatsoever she will";[3] while at the singing of the *Ave Maria* by Gabriel "every face thereby gathered serenity.[4] "Again, in the *Purgatorio*, we find that the mere utterance of her [Mary's] name by dying lips, even when repentance has been till then neglected, is enough to secure the privilege of admission to purgatorial penance, and, consequently, of ultimate salvation. . . . Once more in each of the seven divisions of purgatory, in which severally one of the deadly sins is purged, when examples of the contrary virtues are presented for the meditation of the penitents, the first example is in every case

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 286–287.
[2] *Paradiso*, xxxii., 85-87.
[3] *Ibid.* xxxiii., 40.
[4] *Ibid.* xxxii., 99.

taken from some incident in the life of the Virgin—a thought borrowed by Dante from St. Bonaventura."[1] We have seen that Mary is the Almoner of God's Grace, and that each Grace conferred upon us passes through her hands: but in heaven itself, and for her children who have "entered into the joy of the Lord," is Mary still a Mother of Grace? And does she turn her "eyes of mercy" upon those other children, wayfarers no longer, yet who have not been granted the vision of Light Eternal, the souls "who are content in the fire: for they hope to come, whensoever it be, amongst the blessed"?[2]

It has been stated above that every intellectual being finds its true happiness in the vision and possession of God. It is the unending communion between the Uncreated and the created mind which constitutes the everlasting joy and perfect bliss of the Just in heaven; and it is by means of the grace conferred and corresponded with that this blessedness is won. Since, therefore, the Mother of God has in a secondary way merited this grace for us, she has also in the same subordinate manner merited our essential happi-

[1] *Studies in Dante*, by Edward Moore, D.D. Second series. Oxford, MDCCCXCIX., p. 63.

[2] *Inferno*, i., 118–120. Carlyle's translation.

ness—of course *de congruo* only. We do not imply that once the blessed have received their reward the Mother of God merits any further increase of their essential happiness. The degree of glory is apportioned to each soul by God as the reward of its "hunger and thirst after justice." It cannot be increased, since the opportunity for meriting any increase has passed, and God's decision is irrevocable. We merely say that, since the glory is commensurate with the grace conferred and corresponded with during life and at the hour of death, Mary, who has merited the Grace for us in the manner mentioned, has also merited the glory.

There is, however, other joy in heaven apart from the substantial happiness of the blessed. There is the accessory happiness of which we have spoken, and which adds to and completes the bliss of the Just. The vision and continual presence of Him Whom Mary has given to us, Jesus, "the fruit of her womb," makes for the happiness of the Blessed. So also does the presence of Mary herself, our Mother, to whom after Jesus we are so deeply indebted. What a source of unspeakable joy are Jesus and Mary to those who have loved and served them, who possess them now without fear of ever losing them, and who see face to face the Child and His Mother!

In heaven "death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away.[1] Those who have loved each other on earth and who have died in the friendship of God shall be united once more and for ever, and they shall owe their reunion in a sense to the grace that Mary has merited for them—*de congruo*, as we have explained. Mary will still be a Mother to each human being. As she taught the Evangelists in the early days of the Church the secrets of the Infancy and Hidden Life of her Son, may we not think of her as revealing to His brethren, whom she by her prayers has moulded into a resemblance of Him, the Mysteries of Nazareth, Bethlehem, and Calvary? She can supply details that no other creature can supply. Knowledge of them will add to the happiness of the Blessed. Shall we be at fault in saying that the Mother will not withhold them? And her Mother's love will urge those who enjoy the rest after labour to pray more earnestly and plead more insistently for those who are struggling still in the Vale of Tears. And as each wayfarer reaches home at last, and is crowned by Jesus, and welcomed by Mary, will not the other souls rejoice and be glad anew that

[1] Apoc. xxi. 4.

Mary's prayers have not been in vain or the grace of God been void?[1]

There are other children who have prayed to Mary in life, whose prayers have indeed been heard, but who have a debt to pay to Eternal Justice before they can come to the nuptials of the Lamb. They cry for pity and for mercy: does the Mother of Mercy come to their assistance? Who can doubt it when we find the Church praying in the Holy Sacrifice and in the Office of the Dead: "O God, the Giver of pardon and the Author of human salvation, we beseech Thy clemency, through the intercession of the ever Blessed Virgin Mary and of all Thy Saints, to admit the brethren and sisters, the friends and benefactors of our congregation, to the fellowship of eternal life."[2] The writings of the Saints bear testimony to the fact of the intercession of the Mother of God on behalf of the souls in Purgatory and to the efficacy of this intercession.[3] And when Dante represents the rulers of the world, many of whom had been deadly enemies in life, as singing the *Salve Regina* together,[4] he has

[1] *Cf.* Hugon, *op. cit.*, pp. 292–293; Terrien, *op. cit.*, vol. iv., l. x., c. iii.

[2] *Ex Missa et Off. Defunctorum*, O.P.

[3] *Cf. The Glories of Mary.* Part I., c. viii., sect. ii.

[4] *Purgatorio*, vii. 82.

but embodied in his immortal poem the teaching of theology on the subject. The *Salve Regina*, as our readers are aware, is a prayer to our Blessed Lady as the Mother of Mercy. She is styled *Spes nostra* (our Hope); and the request is made that she will "turn her eyes of mercy towards" those who pray to her, and "after this their exile" that she "will show unto them the Fruit of her womb." The prayer is familiar to all of us. We say it frequently; but the fact that Dante represents it as being sung by the souls in Purgatory emphasises the teaching of theologians on the question of Mary's sovereignty and power there, for as Dr. Hettinger says: "Dante . . . wrote as a theologian," as a "poetic Thomas Aquinas." Mary's power in the realms of Purgatory is acknowledged by theology. How does she wield it for the benefit of those "who hope to come, whensoever it be, amongst the blessed"?

Let us again think of the intensity of a mother's love, especially in regard to a child who is ailing. Her love makes her importunate; urges her to inspire others to plead for and to interest themselves in her child; and she will not be rebuffed. We have a remarkable example of this in the "woman of Canaan."[1] The Mother of God is human, with a Mother's human heart. Will she

[1] Matt. xv. 21–31.

not inspire her other children, who still can merit, to pray for and apply their merits to those exiles in Purgatory, that the days of their exile may be shortened and their home-coming be hastened?

Furthermore, as Mother of mankind, Mary has personal knowledge of those committed to her care. We know that St. Thomas teaches how "each created intelligence understands in the Word, not indeed all things, but the more, the more perfect its vision of the Word. And in the Word, the knowledge of whatever is of interest to them is not withheld from the blessed."[1] What we have said in the preceding chapter with reference to Mary's interest in and intercession for us in life holds good as regards the souls in Purgatory. She knows them most intimately because of her clear vision of God. She takes an interest in them, therefore, greater than that taken by any other creature, because for them the sufferings of her Divine Son have not been fruitless, and their presence in heaven will swell the chorus of praise to God. Hence Mary personally intercedes for them. Are her prayers efficacious of themselves? Can the Mother by her own pleading set her children free? Theological opinion is divided upon this question. But, whatever view we take, we must remember

[1] *Sum. Theol.*, III.A Pars, Q. X., A. 2.

that the merits and satisfaction of Mary the Mother of God are almost limitless. They form an immense treasure for the satisfying of Eternal Justice, for they surpass the collective merits and satisfaction of all other creatures, and are surpassed only by those of Jesus Christ. Mary does not require this treasure. She was sinless and had no debt to pay. And thus the Mother of God can offer to Him, as a means of satisfying for her children's debt to His justice, the treasure of merits and satisfaction she accumulated during her life on earth. Thus can she obtain mercy for them before the Throne of Mercy; hasten the termination of their exile; and bring them at last to the unveiled vision of God.

The attitude of Heresy in regard to Mary Mother of God is fiercely antagonistic. The antagonism is so bitter as to make it utterly unreasonable; yet despite its unreasonableness it cannot rob the Virgin of Nazareth of her glorious title of Mother of God; the testimony of Scripture is too strong and too definite. But it strives to rob the Mother of the consequences and privileges of her Divine Maternity; to minimise her greatness and power; and to withhold all veneration from her who is " the glory of Jerusalem, the joy of Israel, and the honour of her people." It makes much of the words of Jesus Christ to His Mother

at the Marriage Feast, and decides that the Son rebuked the Mother by addressing her as "Woman." Jesus addressed Mary as "Woman" on Calvary, when with His dying breath He gave her to the world. Did He convey a rebuke then? Mary Immaculate is "Woman," the Ideal Woman, the Type of Womanhood, as her Son is the Ideal Man. She is the only woman amongst all others who corresponds to "the woman" foretold from the beginning as the one who should crush the serpent's head, and between whom and the spirits of evil eternal antagonism must exist. The Catholic Church recognises this fact, has always recognised it. The Catholic Church now as in the beginning recognises Mary's power, position, and dignity: recognises that she has "trampled all heresies under her feet": recognises that devotion to and love of God's Mother go hand in hand with loyalty to and love of Jesus Christ. God called her "Blessed amongst women." She herself, filled with the spirit of prophecy because He Who inspired the Prophets of Israel was tabernacled in her bosom, foretold that "henceforth and for ever all generations should call her blessed." The Catholic Church in every age and country turns to the Mother and hails her as "Mary . . . blessed . . . amongst women." In her recognition of the Immaculate the Church

gives yet another proof of her own divine origin.

"It is by Mary that the salvation of the world has been begun, and it is by Mary that it must be consummated."[1] The Church is the Ark of Salvation in this world. Her duty is to labour for the salvation of souls, and so she prays to, and begs the intercession of, the Mother of the Church. She teaches her children to practise devotion to Mary, for she knows full well that such devotion is a true sign of God's predestination to eternal life. She knows from centuries of experience that they "who find Mary shall find life," for Mary gave Jesus, the Life, to men; and that they "shall have salvation from the Lord," since every grace that we obtain comes through our Lady's hands.

Into those Virgin-Mother's hands we place what we have written, all unworthy though it be, while we dare to say with another client of the Immaculate:

Ancor ti prego, Regina, che puoi
Cio che tu vuoli, che conservi sani
. . . . gli affeti suoi.

"This yet I pray thee, Queen,
Who canst do what thou wilt; that in him thou
Wouldst . . . preserve . . . affection sound."

Paradiso, xxxiii.

[1] B. Louis Grignon de Montfort, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

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